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THE NATIONAL HISTORY OF FRANCE

EDITED BY

FR. FUNCK-BRENTANO

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY J. E. C. BODLEY

THE CONSULATE AND  
THE EMPIRE

1809—1815

**THE NATIONAL HISTORY OF FRANCE**

**EDITED BY FR. FUNCK-BRENTANO**

**WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY J. E. C. BODLEY**

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THE NATIONAL HISTORY OF FRANCE

# THE CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

1809—1815

BY  
LOUIS MADELIN

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY  
E. F. BUCKLEY

VOL. II



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# THE EMPIRE AT ITS ZENITH

(continued.)

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### THE IMPERIAL DIVORCE

Conference with Cambacérès. The Roman Question; Rome is annexed by the Decree of the 10th of June, 1809; the Bull of Excommunication; the abduction of the Pope; equivocal attitude of the French clergy. The question of England; the result of the Blockade; England encouraged by Wellington's success in Spain; Napoleon determined to attack him in that country. But before doing so he wishes to obtain a divorce and marry again. He is still devoted to Josephine. The circumstances leading to his seeking a divorce; his firm belief that it was the wish of the country. Fouché indispensable to the Emperor in 1809; he is rebuked but retained. Preliminaries for divorce. The Emperor reduced to exasperation by his family; their thrones in danger. Joseph; Louis; Jerome; the Murats. The family at Fontainebleau. The ceremony of divorce. The Senate called upon to register it. Unfavourable impression produced. Napoleon "is divorcing his Good Fortune."

**O**N the 26th of October, 1809, the Emperor arrived at Fontainebleau; he had summoned Cambacérès to meet him there, and they were closely closeted for two hours discussing various extremely important matters. **Interview with Cambacérès.** The incidents which had followed Essling, and even those which had followed Wagram, were pre-occupying the Emperor, and there can be little doubt that the Arch-Chancellor, however circumspectly, laid the whole blame for them at Fouché's door.

The Emperor was again filled with mistrust of the latter. When, for a brief moment, he had been in favour, he had created him Duke of Otranto, but almost immediately afterwards had deprived him of one of his two portfolios, that of the Interior. True, it had been only a temporary appointment which he held as a stop-gap, but his somewhat abrupt dismissal seemed to indicate that the Emperor's dissatisfaction had revived. Cambacérès must have done his best to add fuel to the flames, for that same evening, the Arch-Chancellor's salons, which were hostile to Fouché, declared that at last they had him in their power. As a



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

matter of fact Napoleon had given nobody any inkling of his intentions. Relying on being able to put the fear of God into Fouché by means of a violent scene, he intended to let him keep the portfolio of Police. And the three matters which he proceeded to discuss with Cambacérès were admirably calculated to lead him to this decision.

\* \* \* \* \*

One of the most pressing problems was the Roman question. It was now to loom so largely in the imperial policy that we must stop for a moment to discuss it.

**The Roman Question.**

During the last few months events had moved with lightning rapidity on the banks of the Tiber. Ever since the day on which Miollis had tried to abduct Pacca, the Secretary of State, from the Quirinal, and Pius VII had literally hurled himself between the Cardinal and the French gendarmes, the Pope had been adamant. The General was occupying Rome but could not succeed in paralysing Pius VII who, he declared in his dispatches, "was thwarting all his measures." Napoleon, on the eve of his departure for Austria, had expected, as soon as victory was won, to "cut the Gordian knot" here as he had done elsewhere, while Murat, hoping to be given Rome in addition to Naples, outdid Miollis himself in urging the Master to settle the matter, and offered to help in the operation. After Essling, Napoleon, as we know, had thought fit on the 17th of May, 1809, to issue an arrogant and vainglorious decree annexing the Roman States to the Empire,

and on the 10th of June the Romans, who, as a matter of fact, were expecting it, had seen the tricolour unfurled on the Castle of Sant'Angelo to the accompaniment of salvos of guns, while from the balcony of the Capitol was read the solemn decree declaring that "whereas the gift bestowed by his august predecessor Charlemagne, to the Bishops of Rome" had never prevented the patrimony from "forming part of the French Empire," the Emperor hereby announced that the Roman States were restored to the French Empire. The city of Rome was to be "a free imperial city," while the lands and domains of the Pope, as well as his palaces, were to be increased to bring in a net annual

## THE IMPERIAL DIVORCE

revenue of two millions" to be allocated to the Holy Father. An extraordinary Commission was to take possession of the Papal States and prepare the organisation of the "constitutional régime." From the Castle of Sant'Angelo to the Capitol, the people had listened to the salvos and the proclamations in profound silence—a fact which provided food for reflection.

As soon as he heard of what had taken place, the Pope, his hand trembling with indignation, had signed the vigorous protest drawn up by Pacca. But he had shown greater hesitation over the Bull of Excommunication destined to exclude "the restorer of her altars" from the bosom of the Church, and before signing it had erased Napoleon's name, so that the Bull *Quum memoranda* levelled a blow at those who had aided and abetted the act of usurpation without actually mentioning the usurper himself. But his name could everywhere be read between the lines.

On the very next morning Miollis saw that Rome was no more his than it had been twenty-four hours previously. The Romans, their eyes fixed as before on the Quirinal, were determined to refuse all the "benefits" with which the Commission tried to overwhelm them, and since the officials of the annexed State, almost without exception, refused their support, the government of Rome became impossible. Radet, who was in command of the gendarmerie, on being summoned to the rescue, was obliged at the end of a few days to confess that the Pope could do more with his little finger than the French with all their bayonets and that his determined opposition was paralysing everything. In spite of his natural moderation, Miollis was exasperated, and authorised Radet, who was merely a rough soldier, to go to the Pope's palace and abduct him. Radet had carried out his

### **Abduction of the Pope.**

task with a brutality which may perhaps have been due to secret embarrassment. The Holy Father had met the unprecedented irruption with admirable composure, a blend of that determination and gentleness which never afterwards forsook him. On being summoned by the General to renounce his power he had replied: "We cannot yield or abandon that which does not belong to us. Temporal power belongs to the Church. We are only her administrator." When Radet informed him that he was going to take him away,

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

he had been unable to control a bitter retort. "So that is the reward for all my patience with the Emperor and Church of France!" he exclaimed. But he had immediately added: "Perhaps in that respect I have been guilty before God and He wishes to punish me; I submit in all humility." Whereupon Radet had shut him up in a locked carriage and conveyed him from Rome *via* Florence and Turin to Grenoble. The Pope, who was sixty-seven and terribly weak and ailing, arrived in France more dead than alive, and this made the abduction, which was scandalous enough in itself, even more outrageous.

The Emperor had never given orders for his seizure and abduction, and, on hearing the news, was at first apparently vexed. But disliking the idea of people imagining that his hand could be forced, he assumed full responsibility for the action, as he had done in the case of the Duc d'Enghien. In any case he had no

### **The Pope in Savona.**

intention of allowing the old man to be sent back to Rome, though for the time being he did not wish to have him in France. He accordingly had him transferred from Grenoble to Savona, where he placed him under the deferential but strict supervision of high officials.

Furthermore, in October, this brutal abduction seemed to a certain extent to have produced in Rome the results Miollis had expected; followed as it was by a clean sweep of Cardinals, heads of Orders and prelates—in fact, of the whole Curia together with its archives—it had apparently broken the back of the opposition at least in the upper classes and a certain section of the bourgeoisie. The masses, however, upheld by the priests, remained sullenly refractory.

The abduction had caused a great scandal throughout Europe, though the indignation remained for the most part unexpressed.

### **Attitude of the Clergy.**

The only consideration that gave the Emperor cause for anxiety was the attitude of the clergy in his Empire. Hitherto loyal to the "restorer of the altars," their fidelity might be undermined by the persecution of the head of the Church.

True, the episcopate established by the Concordat was inclined to humour the Emperor and on occasion to render unto Cæsar not only the things that were Cæsar's but the things that were not. When, in 1806, Napoleon had conceived the idea of introducing

## THE IMPERIAL DIVORCE

into the catechism various new clauses inculcating submission "to the Emperor, to taxation and to military conscription" and of having these strange additions to doctrine foisted upon the dioceses, it was, oddly enough, Le Coz, a constitutional ex-Bishop, who declared that he was "horrified by the course adopted,"

**Le Coz.** and it was also Le Coz, who, on being asked to celebrate St. Napoleon's day, was almost the only man to make the simple enquiry as to where and when this suddenly discovered saint could possibly have lived. The vast majority of the others submitted to all the measures decreed by the "new Constantine."

Then suddenly, in 1807, the conflict between the Emperor and the Sovereign Pontiff had broken out. For a long time the Bishops pretended to know nothing about it; but after the usurpation of Rome and above all the abduction of the Pope, it was no longer possible to maintain such an attitude. The Pope had signed the Bull of Excommunication and it was useless to forbid the Bishops to receive it; before long it would reach the humblest presbyteries. And what, above all, would be the attitude of the priests and Bishops when, as would undoubtedly happen before long, the Pope forced the Emperor to appeal to them? Nevertheless, in October, 1809, Napoleon refused to acknowledge the possibility of trouble from that quarter and still relied on *his* clergy. He

**Napoleon  
Reassures the  
Bishops.**

determined to reassure the Bishops; never, he declared, would he allow a purely political quarrel to invade the domain of religion. And when he called upon *his* Bishops to sing a *Te Deum* after Wagram—which, incidentally, was also after the abduction of the Pope—he issued the following proclamation: "We will persevere in the great work of restoring religion. We will surround her ministers with the consideration which we alone can show them. We will hearken to their voice in all that pertains to the spirit and to the ordering of men's consciences." But it was not as easy as he thought to keep the dispute within bounds. It was destined to prove too strong for him, and when, after a while, it developed into an ecclesiastical quarrel, "the restorer of the altars" was obliged to have recourse to extreme measures in dealing with the clergy who were sincerely devoted to Catholic discipline.

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To keep the clergy "in the strait path," the Emperor relied entirely on his police and, above all, on the man in charge of it. "That fellow Fouché has been a priest," he often declared. It was not exactly true, but he believed it. At all events he had worn the cassock, and on the principle of setting a thief to catch a thief, he argued that Fouché must surely understand the people he had himself dubbed "bigots" and "fanatics" and would be able to make them hold their tongues.

\* \* \* \* \*

But there were further reasons for keeping this precious Minister in office—first and foremost the struggle with England, and secondly the divorce to which the Emperor had at last made up his mind. These were two other important matters which he discussed with Cambacérès that day.

England was bound to give way; to expedite her capitulation, redoubled efforts must be made. As a matter of fact, she was less than ever inclined to do so, at least as far as those at the helm were concerned. Sir Arthur Wellesley had recaptured Portugal and had once again appeared in Spain, while Sicily, where the Bourbon rule had become practically a fiction, was entirely in the hands of Lord William Bentinck, at which England had good reason to feel elated. True, she was beginning to suffer from the effects of the Blockade, but as it was largely ineffective and was constantly being ignored by the forced "allies" of Napoleon, it had not, in 1808 and 1809, yielded all the results the latter had expected; it was only in 1810 that it was to weigh really heavily round his enemy's neck. However, to crush England's pride he was relying not so much on the Blockade as on an immediate knock-out blow delivered in Spain.

After the Battle of Talavera, indecisive though it was, England had loudly proclaimed her victory and Wellesley had been created Viscount Wellington. The battle of the 28th of July, 1809, had undoubtedly put fresh life into the Spanish resistance, which now seemed as though it would last for ever and prove the truth of Canning's prophecy. From the very beginning the latter had maintained

## THE IMPERIAL DIVORCE

that the Spanish business was the canker that would eat into the heart of the Napoleonic colossus. As a matter of fact, public opinion in England was by no means as confident as her Ministers; Spain was a bottomless pit in which the wealth of England was being swallowed up. England, ever open-handed where her Navy is concerned, has always regarded military expenditure as an imposition, and the City even went so far as to send a petition to the Government demanding the evacuation of Spain. It was only the resolute tone of the new Viscount Wellington's dispatches that succeeded in restoring public confidence. But the City's lamentations had not escaped Napoleon; it was in Spain, in the person of the great Viscount Wellington, that he would strike at England, already on the verge of collapse. If he drove the English forces into the sea, Albion, once and for all disillusioned, would give way. Accordingly, immediately after Wagram orders were given for the troops, destined to reinforce the Army of Germany, to be diverted to the Pyrenees, and at the beginning of October, King Joseph was informed that the Emperor would arrive at any moment.

**Napoleon  
Prepares to  
go to Spain.**

Napoleon himself had returned to Paris with the definite intention of leaving for Spain before many weeks had passed. Berthier—and this was significant—was to be given the rank of Major-General of the Army of Spain. But Berthier was always the Emperor's forerunner. During Napoleon's further absence, the task of maintaining order within the Empire would once more be entrusted to Fouché.

All these arrangements, however, came to nothing. A series of events resulted in the Emperor remaining in France,—first, and foremost, the divorce which was the last subject of discussion at this prolonged interview of the 26th of October.

**But is  
Prevented.**

\* \* \* \* \*

Without beating about the bush the Emperor informed the Arch-Chancellor that he had made up his mind to separate from his wife. It was inevitable and admitted of no discussion.

Napoleon had hesitated for a very long time. During the early

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

years of their union he had loved Josephine passionately, even to the point of weakness, and he was still attached to her by bonds perhaps stronger than the ties of love—those formed by long and tender association. He overlooked in her what perhaps he hated more than anything else—carelessness with regard to money matters—and after short scenes in which he took her to task on principle, would forgive the mad prodigality which almost constituted part of the indolent Creole's charm. She was the confidant in whose presence he would let himself go, even giving way to passionate fits of weeping which she alone knew how to calm. In the end he had even attributed "virtues" to her, and twice, once after he had been made Consul for life, and once after the foundation of the Empire, he had, as we know, resisted the furious onslaughts made by his family on this "intruder," and had remained true to his "better half."

But the problem which had arisen as soon as he had been made Consul for life belonged to the realm not of sentiment but of politics. The question of an heir was giving rise to much anxiety in the hearts of supporters of the régime and was constantly preoccupying the mind of the Emperor himself.

Until 1807 the Emperor had been irritated rather than perturbed by the sterility of his marriage, and at first had hesitated to hold Josephine responsible. After all, she was the mother of two children, while he himself had never had any by his various temporary mistresses. And he had no intention of separating from the woman he loved in order to marry again and present the world with the spectacle of a second sterile union.

As we know, he hoped he had discovered an expedient for avoiding a divorce, and had been so fully determined to adopt an heir that he had made provision for the possibility in the imperial constitution. When a son was born to Louis and Hortense, he was ready to adopt him openly before the whole Empire, and those about him regarded the little Napoleon as the future heir when, on the 5th of May, 1807, the child suddenly died of croup. His death created a sensation. Moreover, a few months before this disaster another event, long kept secret, had profoundly perturbed Napoleon and set his mind working in

**Divorce  
Decided  
Upon.**

**The  
Immediate  
Reasons for  
the Decision.**

## THE IMPERIAL DIVORCE

another direction. On the 13th of December, 1806, a young woman belonging to Princess Caroline's household had given birth to a son of whom Napoleon had good reason to believe himself the father. Who knows the possible effect of these two events—the death of one little boy and the birth of another? They probably dealt a mortal blow to the position of the Empress.

But it was also assailed from two other quarters. In Poland the Emperor had fallen desperately in love with Marie Walewska.

**Marie  
Walewska.**

This time it was a serious attachment. She was a charming creature and his tender affection for her was destined to last. This romance had somewhat

loosened the ties of sentiment binding him to Josephine, and the news of it had filled the Empress with greater anxiety than any other of her husband's love affairs. Soon afterwards the Tilsit meeting had taken place, and in his enthusiasm for his new friendship, the Tsar was declared one day to have hinted that he would not look with an unfavourable eye on a marriage between his sister, the Grand Duchess Catherine, and one of the Bonapartes. In the circumstances, the young Prince Jerome seemed

**Possibility  
of a Russian  
Marriage.**

to be the obvious choice. In Paris, however, a whole group had immediately suggested the idea of the Grand Duchess marrying the Emperor himself—a union which would constitute the

most pleasing pledge of the solidarity and endurance of the Russian alliance. The idea had gained ground, and at Erfurt Talleyrand had been entrusted with the task of sounding the Tsar on the subject of such a possibility. On confiding this delicate mission to Talleyrand, Napoleon had added a few words which reveal his whole attitude towards the divorce. "I love Josephine," he declared; "never shall I be so happy. This step will be a sacrifice on my part, but I am being urged on all sides. . . . France is supposed to have a life-interest in me. A son would be extremely useful to me!" But the Tsar had proceeded to wriggle

**The Tsar  
Opposed  
to It.**

out of it, protesting that his mother alone had authority over his sisters and that she was not very favourably disposed towards the Emperor of the French. And indeed the dowager Empress

had apparently been as indignant as alarmed by this "prétention," and had forthwith married her daughter Catherine, her



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only marriageable daughter at the time, to an Oldenburg prince.

Various other events had further conduced to warn the Emperor. The Talleyrand-Fouché "conspiracy," the object of which had been to set Murat on the throne, in the event of anything happening to Napoleon, had given the latter food for reflection. Obviously nobody would regard the accession of a man like Joseph with favour, and during the year that had just passed, the Master himself had been further enlightened regarding the ineptitude of his brothers. It was perfectly clear that nobody would submit to the rule of these "princes," who were utterly devoid of all personal merit. He opened his heart to Hortense on the subject. "France has no confidence in my brothers," he declared. "Eugene does not bear my name, and in spite of all the pains I have taken to secure tranquillity for France after my death, there will be complete anarchy. A son of my own can alone set matters right, and if I have not sought a divorce before, it is solely my devotion to your mother that has prevented me, for it is the desire of France."

It was not, however, the desire of France, though it was undoubtedly the desire of the imperial world. Moreover, Europe, now completely subjugated, seemed to provide an open field for the pretensions cherished in the Emperor's immediate circle.

\* \* \* \* \*

When after having discussed with Cambacérès the various questions which claimed his attention, Napoleon passed on to the matter of the divorce; he did not seek the Arch-Chancellor's advice but merely informed him of his decision. He had just declared his determination to quash all resistance both at home and abroad; unless the Legislative Body took a back seat it would be dissolved; public opinion, gloomy for a time, was to be reassured; the Pope, on finding he met with no support either from the clergy who were kept under close supervision, or from devastated Europe, would give way; the Blockade was to be so rigorously enforced and extended that England, threatened with ruin, would collapse, while the blow he was about to strike in Spain would place that country under his heel and make "Albion" sue for peace. And if Josephine resigned herself, the Emperor felt

## THE IMPERIAL DIVORCE

confident of finding somewhere in prostrate Europe the wife who would be his for the asking. "He looked as though he were walking in a halo of glory," wrote Cambacérès.

But for the preparations such a programme entailed, the Emperor still had need of Fouché. And thus, although the Arch-Chancellor had not spared him, the interview with Cambacérès did not lead to the fall of the Minister. On the following day, the new Duke of Otranto was summoned to Fontainebleau, where,

**Scene with Fouché.** between the four walls of the Emperor's cabinet, he took part in one of the most violent scenes it had ever been his lot to face. But Napoleon, having relieved his mind and warned him, retained him in office. He had no intention of allowing a ministerial crisis to complicate the serious business for which he required Fouché's assistance, above all the divorce for which the latter had been offering to prepare public opinion for the last three years, and the subsequent problem of a second marriage, which was almost entirely to absorb the Master's attention for months to come.

\* \* \* \* \*

On receiving the news of the Emperor's arrival at Fontainebleau the Court immediately flocked there, first amongst them the Empress. All too soon she knew that Napoleon had had a lengthy interview with the Arch-Chancellor on the previous day and she suspected the truth. But her husband told her nothing. He had sent for Eugene, who had returned to Milan, as he wished the unfortunate woman to have her children with her when the blow fell.

**The Court Flocks to Fontainebleau.** Truth to tell, the anxiety of the Bonaparte family was hardly less acute than that of the Empress herself. Though for the last ten years they had been hoping for the divorce now pending, they were filled with vague apprehensions regarding its possible consequences. Moreover, for some time past the Emperor had made no attempt to hide the violent irritation with which the attitude of his relatives inspired him.

In fact, the Bonapartes had definitely fallen from favour.

Lucien was now altogether out of it. And if he persisted in

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

his rebellious attitude even his children would be involved in his disgrace. "If he does not prove more accommodating," declared the Emperor grandiloquently,

**Lucien.** "I shall not be able to give Lolotte a king." At times, however, Joseph exasperated him even more than did Lucien. The hapless

**Joseph.** King of Spain had done the Emperor far more harm than good, and had crowned his misdeeds

by a ridiculous display of arrogance. "For the Crown to shine in Spain with full effulgence," he confided to his friends, "it must be entirely Spanish." Although his position on the throne was far from secure, the foolish creature adopted a haughty attitude and even went so far as to advise the Emperor not to come, "for he is hated by my subjects," he declared. The Emperor's one thought, on the other hand, was to dethrone his brother. Even Ferdinand VII, who was constantly protesting his devotion—at times in somewhat stereotyped terms—would be better than this idiotic brother. And he merely postponed his decision until he had succeeded in reducing Spain to submission.

Louis was more directly menaced, for his conduct had been even more reprehensible. "You see only Holland," Napoleon

**Louis.** had written to him as early as 1807. Addressed to a King of Holland, the complaint was certainly

curious. True, Louis, finding himself ruler of a country fundamentally hostile to French domination, had made a virtue of necessity and had encouraged Dutch nationalist pretensions. He proceeded to voice the grievances of "his people," and unfortunately his complaints were rendered all the more acrimonious by the hypochondria which his differences with Hortense only served to aggravate. Napoleon, sick to death of these family squabbles, was still further irritated by finding that this brother, who had once been his favourite, was doing him more harm than his most untrustworthy allies. Had he not allowed large consignments of England merchandise to enter Holland again? The Emperor became more and more irritated every day; a score of letters might be quoted, last but not least the one he wrote on the 17th of July, 1809: "My dear brother . . . Holland is an English province." As all this had taken place under a Prince of the Blood, he made up his mind to take away the crown he had given him and annex the country.

## THE IMPERIAL DIVORCE

Just as urgent, though for other reasons, was the removal of Jerome. His was not the cold arrogance of a Joseph, or the gloomy hypochondria of a Louis; he was merely **Jerome.** a scatter-brain. He might for all the world have been a merry schoolboy on holiday, with the Kingdom of Westphalia as a plaything in his hands. His first thought on entering his fairy realm was to use it as a gold-mine, to serve his pleasure and caprice. He, too, came to regard the French soldiers who had remained in "his States" as unwelcome interlopers, although, as the Emperor sternly pointed out to him, it was these very soldiers who had won him the throne he occupied. He was constantly in hot water, and in the spring of 1809, when menaced by the Duke of Brunswick-Oels, displayed the most contemptible cowardice. He completely lost his head, with the result that he infected others with his own panic. Napoleon was extremely angry with him and threatened to deprive him of the command of his troops before degrading him yet further, declaring that he refused to "risk the glory of his armies for the sake of foolish family considerations."

And, in October, 1809, it did indeed seem as though the Emperor were on the point of renouncing all family considerations once and for all. Joachim Murat was in the same boat **Murat.** as his brothers-in-law; he was even more the vassal king than they were, and the hot-blooded and supremely vain Gascon was always on the point of revolt. "Send orders to the King of Naples . . ." the Emperor was constantly writing to Clarke, his Minister of War, who was not even a Marshall. More than once did the trooper King regret having exchanged the saddle for a throne! In any case, though more lachrymose than violent, he never ceased to inveigh against his subordinate position, while constantly protesting his "tender love" for the Emperor in ridiculously exaggerated terms. The whole family, in fact, was in danger. Was it destined to be swamped by the very event for which it had so ardently longed? Be this as it may, they were all trying to see their way and to plot and plan for themselves.

Moreover, one and all in the imperial circle, foreseeing a divorce, were laying their batteries. But of the divorce itself

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nobody in Fontainebleau, during that October and November of 1809, dared to breathe a word, though the prospect of it created a strained atmosphere, admirably reflected in contemporary memoirs and letters. But only the pen of a Saint-Simon, had he been present, could have done full justice to its cruelty.

**Strained  
Atmosphere  
at Fontaine-  
bleau.**

While Louis, Jerome, the Murats, Élise, and Pauline, representing the family at Fontainebleau, were torn between joy over the event and fear of the future, the Court also flocked thither, knowing all but holding their tongues. Cambacérès was preparing the legal documents, Fouché was moulding public opinion, Champagny was negotiating with Russia on the subject of the future marriage, while Josephine, officially ignorant, feared everything. Still proud and majestic, she was desperate at heart, and on occasion her red eyes betrayed the torture she was suffering.

Cambacérès was drawing up the legal documents; an Emperor could not be divorced with the same scant ceremony as a middle-class nonentity. Napoleon insisted above all that there should be no hint of repudiation; the dissolution of the marriage tie was to be based on mutual consent, sanctioned by a solemn *senatus consultum* and legalised by a decree which would leave Josephine her title and precedence of everybody except the new Empress. There remained the religious bond. The marriage had to be annulled by some qualified religious authority. From the Pope nothing could be expected. The Metropolitan would accordingly be requested to pronounce the decree of annulment.

**Arrangements  
for the  
Divorce.**

Napoleon would have liked to settle everything before leaving Fontainebleau, where he was expecting the arrival of Eugene.

**The German  
Kings in  
Paris.**

But unfortunately the German Kings, who, ever since the Treaty of Vienna, had been anxious to come and offer the Emperor their congratulations and thanks, chose this very moment to announce their visit. It was a blunder which irritated the Emperor all the more because he did not dare to refuse them, and the whole crew presented themselves at Fontainebleau—the King of Bavaria, the King of Würtemberg, and the King of Saxony. The “plate-bande” of Erfurt had been transplanted! Napoleon, who felt

## THE IMPERIAL DIVORCE

that he ought to receive them in Paris, returned to the capital for a series of festivities—a solemn *Te Deum*, the opening of the session of the Legislative Body, receptions at the Tuileries, etc. After going to Notre-Dame, on the 2nd of December, to celebrate the anniversary of his Consecration, the Emperor repaired in triumphal procession to the Palais-Bourbon, where he read a speech full of pride and arrogance. One passage in particular called for notice—the one extolling the Russian alliance, which

**Proposed Marriage with the Grand Duchess Anne.** was a clear proof of the efforts being made to strengthen the bonds with the brother of the Grand Duchess Anne, whose name was now in everybody's mouth. As a matter of fact, on the 22nd of November, the Emperor had instructed Caulaincourt to ask for the hand of the young Princess.

Meanwhile, the Empress attended all the ceremonies by the Emperor's side, a set smile on her lips and dark despair in her heart. Eugene, who was still expected, did not make his appearance, but the Emperor felt that it was impossible further to prolong such a cruelly false situation. On the 30th of November, after dinner, he opened his heart to Josephine, who immediately fainted. With the help of Bausset, the Prefect of the Palace, he carried her to her room and sent for Dr. Corvisart and Queen Hortense. Corvisart reassured him, and Hortense having also arrived, an extremely painful scene took place between Napoleon and his stepdaughter. He protested, in all sincerity, that his feelings for Josephine and her children remained unchanged, and a few days later, when the Empress returned to take part in the discussion, he told her what he was constantly repeating to himself: "I still love you, but politics have no heart; they have only a head." Eugene, who arrived at last on the 7th of December, persuaded his mother to give her consent to the separation demanded by concern for the future—was also an immediate necessity for the stability of the Empire.

\* \* \* \* \*

At nine o'clock on the evening of the 15th of December, the whole family met in the Emperor's large cabinet. Cambacérès, who had been entrusted with the task of "registering the deter-

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

mination of the imperial couple and communicating it to the Senate," had himself prepared their speeches, but without any previous agreement the Emperor and Empress substituted their own statements, the nobility of which still stirs the heart. The Arch-Chancellor recorded them and drew up the report which was communicated to the Senate on the following day.

When the House met at eleven o'clock on the 16th, Regnaud de Saint-Jean-d'Angély explained why it had been regarded as

**Official  
Announcement  
of the  
Divorce.**

necessary to have a *senatus consultum*; was not the Senate entrusted with the power to deal with "anything that had not been provided for by the Constitution and which was necessary for its proper working"? And was not the dissolution of the Emperor's marriage with the object of securing the imperial succession "necessary for the proper working of the Constitution"? A wonderful impression was produced by the fact that only one speech was made—and that by Prince Eugene. He spoke with sincere emotion of the sentiments which had inspired the Emperor and his mother, the Empress, to separate. A Commission having been appointed, Lacépède was charged with drawing up the report, a task in which he displayed much futile erudition in quoting all the precedents from the time of the earliest Merovingians. There was some surprise—a submissive attitude having become so much a matter of course—when out of 87 voters, four abstained from voting and seven voted against. On the 12th of January, the Metropolitan's Court, having declared itself competent, annulled the religious marriage. Many Catholics, however, regarded a decree pronounced without the intervention of the competent body in Rome as nul and void.

Never, moreover, did a repudiated spouse find herself surrounded with greater honour and respect in the day of her downfall. Yet it was with despair in her heart that,

**Josephine's  
Departure.**

on the 16th of December, 1809, Josephine tore herself from the arms of Napoleon, who was also convulsed with grief. And it was a heart-broken woman who a few hours later stepped out of her carriage and entered Malmaison. "Well, my friend," she exclaimed with tears in her eyes, when she received Thibaudeau on the following day, "they have had their way."

## THE IMPERIAL DIVORCE

The ex-conventional was naturally inclined to sympathise with her bitterness. And it could not be denied that there was an almost general feeling of uneasiness, of secret dread, which continued to be felt even by those who had advised the divorce. Thus, weighty though the political reasons for the cruel decision may have been, the Emperor was perhaps wrong eventually to resign himself to it. Strange to say, both Royalists and Republicans regarded Josephine as a friend at Court, while for long afterwards those who had the entrée to the Tuileries continued to be dazzled by the memory of the noble dignity and grace with which she presided over the imperial assemblies. The provinces, too, had been filled with admiration of her when she appeared by the Emperor's side; her apparent good-nature and generosity touched all hearts. "I was cut to the quick when the Emperor had the cruelty to separate from her," wrote a little bourgeois from La Vendée. Even the soldiers, who had often seen her with their "Little Corporal," were upset by her fall. "He ought not to have given up his old girl!" they declared in 1813, when disaster after disaster was overtaking France. "She brought him luck and us, too!" Josephine might not have regarded the tribute as particularly flattering, and would doubtless have preferred the reply which Canova declared he made when the Emperor expressed surprise that the great artist should not have congratulated him on his second marriage. "How can I congratulate Your Majesty on having divorced his Good Fortune!" he retorted. And it was not long before public opinion echoed the words of the outspoken artist and declared that in separating from the companion of his miraculous youth Napoleon "had divorced his Good Fortune."

**Her  
Popularity.**

SOURCES. *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XIX, XX). Lecestre, *Lettres inédites* (II). Du Casse, *Correspondance de Joseph*. Le Coz, *Correspondance*. Memoirs and Reminiscences by Barante (I), Molé, Artaud, Jauffret, Consalvi, Caulaincourt, Thibaudeau, Queen Hortense, Madame de Rémusat, and Roederer. Santo Domingo, *Tablettes romaines* (*Revue Napoléonienne*, 1901).

WORKS. Those already mentioned by Sorel (VII), Driault (III), Haussonville (*Église romaine*), Lanzac de Laborie (IV), Masson (*Famille*, IV, V, VI), Vandal, Madelin (*Fouché* and *Rome de Napoléon*). Thiers, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire* (Book XXVII). Masson, *Huit conférences. Le Pape et l'Empereur*. Masson, *Napoléon et les femmes*. Masson, *Joséphine répudiée*. Welschinger *Le divorce de Napoléon*. Welschinger, *Le Pape et l'Empereur*.



## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE EMPEROR'S MARRIAGE

At first Napoleon considers only the Russian marriage. The Tsar opposed to it, and the Russian imperial family violently hostile. The Tsar above all anxious to have his interests in Poland guaranteed. Austria offers an Archduchess. The attitude of the public towards these possibilities. The Emperor, foreseeing the Tsar's refusal, wishes to give the impression of having already made his choice. The Council of the 29th of January. Napoleon enters into an agreement with Austria. His letter to the Tsar; he "has decided in favour of the Austrian Princess." The general impression produced. The Prince de Ligne's "beautiful heifer." Marie Louise. The Emperor's emotion. The fate of the future heir. The *Senatus Consultum* of the 17th of February, 1810. The marriage in Vienna; the meeting at Courcelles. The religious marriage at the Louvre. Metternich's toast. Results of the marriage both at home and abroad. Had Napoleon "wedded treachery"?

**O**N his return from Austria, the Emperor, not expecting the divorce proceedings to take so long, had as early as November opened negotiations for a second marriage.

At that time he contemplated only the possibility of marrying a Russian Princess. He felt that the damage done to Austria since 1792 by France in general and himself in particular was

**Napoleon  
Considers a  
Russian  
Marriage.**

so great that an impassable gulf now yawned between himself and the Habsburgs. The gracious friendliness with which the Tsar had met his advances at Tilsit had inspired him with confidence. Moreover, in suing for the hand of a

Grand-Duchess he would be killing two birds with one stone. By marrying a Romanoff he would strengthen a crumbling alliance which he still hoped would bring overwhelming pressure to bear on England. His union with a dynasty which ruled a third of Europe would have a devastating effect on that country—"the alliance of a hundred million souls," he declared.

Without waiting for the consummation of the divorce, he sent a letter to St. Petersburg formally asking for the hand of the little Grand-Duchess. But when it arrived the Tsar had just set out on

## THE EMPEROR'S MARRIAGE

a long tour of his Empire. Feeling that a demand which would place him in the most embarrassing situation was in the air, it is more than likely that he deliberately created an *alibi* for himself.

His "friendly feelings" for Napoleon at Tilsit—if indeed they had ever been genuine—were now considerably weakened. It will be remembered that, immediately after the Treaty of Vienna, he had insisted upon the signature of a document in which his ally undertook never to restore a Kingdom of Poland or even to allow it to be restored. And to the letter, which Caulaincourt was to present, asking for the hand of the Grand-Duchess, Napoleon now added a note calculated to give the Tsar full satisfaction on this score.

### **The Tsar's Attitude.**

The latter had not yet reached the point of repudiating the French alliance from which he had derived so many advantages—very far from it. But between this and handing over his sister to "the Corsican" was a far cry. Although his was not an ancient dynasty, this Romanoff was even prouder of his blood than were the Habsburgs; he was "the autocrat of all the Russias," and it was almost physical torture to him to think that the necessity of preserving the French alliance might force him to welcome into the bosom of his family the man whom, in his intimate letters, he still called "Bonaparte." At Erfurt, as we know, he had evaded the overtures made to him by taking refuge behind his mother's disapproval. And, indeed, the latter regarded with terror, not to mention horror, the idea of "delivering up" her daughter into the hands of that "monster." She gave what was evidently sincere expression to her feelings in her letters to her eldest daughter Catherine, who had become a German princess. They gave further proof of her hatred for "that villainous creature who holds nothing sacred and knows no restraint because he does not even believe in God." And it was to "this villain" that she was expected to make "a holocaust" of her daughter, still a girl of tender years, who would be plunged into the poisonous atmosphere of Paris. "Catau," she concluded, "all this makes me shudder!" "Catau" replied that if she received a formal request she must "gain time; she must

### **His Mother's Opposition to the Marriage.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

cajole" Caulaincourt and the French, pleading that Anne would not be physically ripe for marriage for another three years, and thus foster hopes she had not the slightest intention of gratifying.

This was the course that Alexander determined to adopt. On returning to St. Petersburg on the 26th of December, 1809, he

### **The Question of Poland.**

received from Caulaincourt the formal request for the hand of his sister, together with the note relating to Poland. But he pretended to be dealing only with the latter. In the course of a few hours a regular treaty, drawn up by the Chancellor Romanzoff, was submitted to the French Ambassador. Its terms were such, however, that, in spite of his anxiety to ingratiate himself with the Tsar, it was impossible for Napoleon to accept them. He had to undertake not only never to restore the Kingdom of Poland, but to defend against all and sundry the treaties by which her name had been expunged from the list of nations. This meant that France would be an accomplice after the fact in the crime which for the last thirty years had been weighing down the consciences of the States who had benefited by the Polish partition. Caulaincourt, however, in the hope of securing the desired marriage, felt it his duty to sign this sorry undertaking on the 4th of January, 1810. Meanwhile

### **The Tsar Temporises.**

the Tsar was trying to find an acceptable formula in which to convey his irrevocable decision to refuse the offer of marriage. In the end, with a view to prolonging the agony, he gave the reply suggested by "Catau."

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile Napoleon was growing impatient. And it was just at this juncture that Austria came forward with an offer.

We are already acquainted with Metternich's ideas; his anxiety to destroy the Franco-Russian alliance had become so strong that he did not hesitate to contemplate a family alliance between the House of Austria and "Bonaparte," the inevitable result of which he felt would be the loosening and eventually the breaking of the bonds between Napoleon and Russia. And as early as the 29th of November, 1809, he made up his mind to take the initiative

## THE EMPEROR'S MARRIAGE

and made definite overtures to the French Chargé d'Affaires in Austria. This had been followed by a second attempt, this time in Paris, where an attaché at the Austrian Embassy, in the course of an apparently casual conversation with Sémonville, made further even more definite suggestions. The conversation was immediately reported to the Emperor, who was now ready to lend a willing ear.

He was, however, still hoping for a favourable reply from St. Petersburg, and waited until the 25th of January, 1810. But the public, to whom indiscreet talk had already half revealed the

**An Offer from Austria.** secret, were eagerly discussing the subject. The Russian marriage was popular in many circles; it would mean the strengthening of the alliance and consequently be a guarantee of lasting peace.

**The Attitude of the Public.** The old revolutionaries were unanimously of opinion that it had one outstanding advantage—it would prevent the Austrian marriage. A daughter of the House of Austria, a great-niece of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, brought up as a strict Catholic, would, they felt, represent all the traditions and ideas of the *Ancien Régime* on the throne that had been "raised by the Nation." "If he were to marry a great-niece of Marie Antoinette," observed one old conventional, "what would happen to all that remains of the Revolution? I should prefer a Russian." Fouché therefore carried on a campaign in support of the Russian marriage, of which for the last two years he had been one of the first to cherish the prospect, and in his daily bulletin to the Emperor he informed him that public opinion was definitely hostile to the entry of an Austrian princess into France.

As a matter of fact, the prospect was extremely pleasing to all those members of the *Ancien Régime* who during the last four years had rallied to the support of the Empire.

**The Royalists in Favour of Austria.** Since the arrival in the Tuileries of a great-niece of Louis XVI would justify all past and future adherence on the part of Royalists, it would undoubtedly guarantee a policy increasingly hostile to the recollections of the Revolution and even to its institutions. A man like Fontanes even went so far as to regard it as an "act of expiation."

The Beauharnais, influenced by Josephine herself, who had

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

remained faithful to the memory of Marie Antoinette, openly declared in favour of "the Austrian." This in itself was quite sufficient to make the Bonapartes hostile to her; moreover, they were still flirting with the extraordinary idea of marrying the Emperor to Lucien's daughter, "Lolotte," whom Napoleon had once meditated giving to Ferdinand VII; the whole family accordingly begged Lucien to be more amenable and in any case to send his daughter to Paris. And letters were written to St. Petersburg to the effect that "the whole family was in favour of Lucien's daughter."

The Emperor, however, maintained a sphinx-like attitude. He had waited seven weeks for the Tsar's reply. At last, on the 27th of January, 1810, he received a letter from Caulaincourt which opened his eyes. He was being fooled so as to be eventually cast adrift. As he had no intention of allowing himself to be bamboozled, he immediately altered his objective and turned his guns on Vienna. But he wished to make it appear that, after due consultation with his Ministers, and thus indirectly with the country at large, he had made his own choice.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the 29th of January, 1810, a Crown Council consisting of some fifteen to twenty persons was held. The Emperor laid the situation before them—he could marry a Russian Grand-Duchess, an Austrian Archduchess, a Saxon Princess, or lastly a Frenchwoman. Personally, he declared, he would have preferred a Frenchwoman (this was meant for Lolotte's parents), but, since it was a matter of State, the possible advantages to the Empire of a union with a foreign princess had to be considered. Whereupon, at his request, Champagny read a paper weighing the advantages offered by the various alternatives, after which the debate was opened.

The Arch-Treasurer, Lebrun, was the only advocate of the Saxon marriage—which was in keeping with his reputation as a believer in the golden mean. But, as a matter of fact, it was really a conflict between the supporters of the Russian marriage and those

## THE EMPEROR'S MARRIAGE

of the Austrian marriage. The Bonapartes having given up all idea of Lolotte, Murat spoke with great vehemence in favour of Russia. He had his own personal reasons, which he did not divulge, for fearing too close a rapprochement between the Emperor and Austria; the preservation of the Russian alliance, which was far more precious than the friendship of Austria, demanded, he declared, the choice of a Grand-Duchess. Moreover, the advent of an Austrian Princess, born and brought up in a Court so consistently hostile to the new France, would be regarded as a menace to the principles upon which the régime had been built.

**Murat's  
Opinion.**

His opinion was vigorously opposed by several members of the Council; it was precisely because Austria had been the bitterest foe of France, they retorted, that an intimate alliance between her and the new French dynasty would make the last efforts of her enemies, more particularly of England, vain and futile; maritime peace would be the result. Apparently

**Talleyrand's  
Opinion.**

Talleyrand supported this contention; it was, as we know, in keeping with his own consistently Austrophile policy. The ex-minister Barras seized the opportunity definitely to repudiate his connection with the old regicide Jacobins; the marriage, he had the audacity to maintain, "would absolve France in the eyes of Europe, as well as in her own, of a crime of which she was not guilty, but for which one faction alone had been responsible"—this was a direct hit at Fouché, who was present. Fontanes, supported by Cardinal

**Fontanes'  
Opinion.**

Fesch, went even further; "it would be an act of expiation on the part of France and the fairest page in her history," he exclaimed. Eugene de Beauharnais, acting as his mother's mouthpiece, also advised the Austrian marriage and was seconded by Mollien.

Thus the majority were apparently in favour of this solution of the problem, but Cambacérès, whose opinion always carried great weight, pronounced against it. Although he frequently defended himself against the charge of having "voted the death," since he had been

**Cambacérès'  
Opinion.**

in favour of "the reprieve," he dreaded any reactionary movement. Of his own secret fears he said nothing, but emphasised the menace to the solidarity of the Russian alliance afforded by an

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Austrian marriage. He was the last to express an opinion, and the future was to prove him right.

The only part Napoleon played in the discussion was to make two brief remarks, first in favour of one side and then of the other. He thanked and dismissed the Council without giving any inkling of his own attitude. The important point, as far as he was concerned, was for people to believe he was engaged in weighing the alternatives and making his choice. And in this he had succeeded.

He was able to congratulate himself on having done so when, six days later, on the 5th of February, 1810, he received despatches from Caulaincourt making it plain that the Tsar was undoubtedly paving the way for a refusal. He immediately made up his mind,

### **Decision in Favour of Austria.**

and on the 6th sent Prince Eugene to Schwarzenberg, the Austrian Ambassador, to inform him that he was prepared to marry the Archduchess Marie Louise, but only on condition that the Ambassador forthwith guaranteed his Sovereign's consent. Schwarzenberg, completely taken aback, hesitated; on being pressed by Eugene, however, he eventually decided to give the required guarantee. But the Emperor was determined to play up to the end the part of the great potentate who deigns to confer his hand rather than to offer it. And on the 6th he accordingly summoned another Council.

When the Council met very late in the evening current rumour had already informed it of the Emperor's choice, and after Champagny had read aloud the last letters received from St. Petersburg, the Russian marriage no longer had any supporters. The speeches were now unanimously in favour of the Austrian match.

On dismissing the Council, Napoleon requested Champagny to remain, and instructed him to send two notes to St. Petersburg. In the first the reasons for "passing over" the Grand-Duchess were to be set forth. But Alexander was to be assured that this would in no way affect Napoleon's friendship for him; the alliance would not suffer in any way. As soon as this note had been sent,

### **Russia Informed.**

a second was to be drawn up, but was only to be despatched later on. "To-morrow evening," the Emperor instructed Champagny, "when you have signed the agreement with Prince von Schwarzenberg, you will send another messenger to inform the Tsar that I have decided

## THE EMPEROR'S MARRIAGE

in favour of the Austrian." This curious expression clearly reveals his attitude; for the time being he attached but little importance to the person and even the name of the Archduchess; the marriage was an affair of State, and Anne and Marie Louise merely represented "the Russian" and "the Austrian." In any case he congratulated himself on having "decided in favour of the Austrian" when, a few days later, he received the messenger sent off from St. Petersburg on the 6th of February bearing the Tsar's explicit refusal.

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The announcement of the marriage electrified France and eventually the rest of Europe.

France received the news with mixed feelings. The counter-revolutionary faction was jubilant; the members of the Right who had rallied to the Empire felt their position confirmed; the Die-Hards of the Faubourg Saint-Germain alone appeared thunderstruck. Some of the Catholics regarded the pending union with the most Catholic Court of Europe as a pledge of a possible reconciliation between the Emperor and the Pope. But in the camp of the old Revolutionaries consternation reigned. Thibaudeau rushed to Fouché and informed him of the alarm felt by the group. Fouché pretended to make light of it. As a matter of fact, the "regicide" Minister was not going to lay down his arms until Austria had reassured him regarding his own fate—but this did not take long.

Truth to tell, Austria was very far from wishing to avenge such ancient grievances. The dynasty, to quote Metternich's expression with reference to his master, had never possessed anything but "the entrails of a State"; it had never shown much indignation over Louis XVI's execution or even over that of Marie Antoinette. And for the time being Vienna was jubilant at the prospect of a fairly speedy rupture of the Franco-Russian alliance.

This was a result which was obvious to all. "There is one thing about which you may be certain," wrote Dalberg, now a naturalised Frenchman, to Metternich, "and that is that in less than five months a coolness will have sprung up between us and Russia, and that in less than eighteen months we shall be at war with her." And it was

**Effect on  
France and  
Europe.**

**Dalberg's  
Prophecy.**



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

precisely this consideration that depressed many a far-sighted Frenchman. On the very day of the marriage and in the midst of the wedding festivities, Mounier, an alert and well-informed politician, was heard to mutter: "All this will not prevent us from having to go and die in Bessarabia one of these days,"—a gloomy reference to Charles XII's fate!

The populace, however, is rarely far-sighted, and regarded the Emperor's union with the country that had been the implacable foe of France for the last twenty years as a sure guarantee of peace on the continent. And yet, there were numbers still alive who, seventeen years previously, had seen "the Austrian woman" dragged to the guillotine amid hoots and jeers—the "Austrian woman," charged with having "lost the King and betrayed the Nation." And what burden of misfortune was this other "Austrian woman" going to bring with her, this daughter of a tragic race, now doomed to manifold disasters? The day was to come when Napoleon, fleeing across Russia before the blast of a defeat which could be traced almost directly to this event, was to declare to Caulaincourt that it would have been better if the marriage had never taken place. We shall see how right he was.

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"Austria is sacrificing a beautiful heifer to the Minotaur," observed the Prince de Ligne. "A beautiful heifer!"—In the beginning the Emperor asked nothing else of the family who was providing him with a wife, the future mother of his children. At first it was regarded as unnecessary for her even to be beautiful.

And Marie Louise was not beautiful. "She is ugly rather than pretty," replied Metternich on being questioned in Paris. "But she has a good figure and when she has been dressed up and tittivated a bit she will look very nice."

"Ugly rather than pretty," but fresh and rosy—too rosy, she was destined to possess, at least in the eyes of her husband, a quite unexpected charm—she was cuddlesome. An apparently quite insignificant little girl at the Viennese Court, she was to reveal herself to Napoleon in a light which he least desired or expected—she was a sensualist. I merely mention the fact because, as we shall see, it was not destined to be devoid of con-

## THE EMPEROR'S MARRIAGE

sequences. Before her marriage she had been referred to as Iphigenia; later on historians called her Delilah. But she was neither Iphigenia nor Delilah, for it was certainly not from virtue that she sacrificed herself, nor from vice that she succeeded for a time in sapping the hero of his strength.

The strict and narrow education of an Austrian Princess had been but little calculated to develop her naturally limited intelligence, and she knew nothing of the world or of the **Marie Louise.** Age in which she had been born beyond the misfortunes of the "House,"—there being for her only one House—the House of Habsburg. When she had been told that "the Corsican," the "Antichrist," as she called him, was divorcing the Empress and seeking a wife in Europe, she had been secretly alarmed. "I pity the poor princess he chooses," she wrote. And it was herself! Her father did not trouble to bring forward a host of arguments to force her into the marriage. The Monarchy had lost half its provinces and wished to keep the rest; this was the only reason given to the Archduchess—"the entrails of a State!" She was accustomed to docility and submitted without protest. She would marry the "Antichrist." But she was destined to discover in him a man whom nobody else had ever known—tender and jovial and attentive to her every wish, whether great or small. Yet even after her marriage she did not understand any better than she had done before the marvellous man who had made her the greatest Queen in Christendom, nor for that matter the country which had welcomed her and which she was afterwards so soon to forget.

Napoleon awaited this strange companion with an emotion which grew greater every day and which must have astonished even himself. With haughty arrogance, he had chosen "the **Napoleon's** Austrian woman" and now he could hardly control **Excitement.** his excitement as he waited for her. She was "the daughter of the Cæsars," and the entry of this child, the descendant of both Louis XIV and Charles V, into the bed of the soldier of fortune was a victory which confirmed and surpassed all his previous victories; if she presented him with a son, the boy, uniting in his person all the glories of both past and present, would be accepted by all. And thus this marriage would secure the peace of the world as well as the definite triumph of the régime he had established.

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

He was anxious to give his new wife a splendid welcome. From the trousseau to the wedding gifts, everything was to be of unsurpassed magnificence. There was not a single detail that the Emperor did not insist on supervising himself. Moreover, he made up his mind to reform the Court, and, willy-nilly, to incorporate in it as many representatives of the old nobility as could possibly be netted in. The etiquette was to be made stricter and the pomp and ceremony increased. This was necessary, he declared, for a princess "accustomed to Court ceremonial."

As a matter of fact, the Emperor's imagination was soaring aloft to yet giddier heights. This "daughter of the Cæsars" would give him a son and he had made up his mind that, even at this early hour, the child should have a magnificent future mapped out for him. On the 17th of February, 1810, when there had barely been time for the agreements to be exchanged, a *Senatum Consultum* bestowed upon the future heir of the Empire the magic title of King of Rome. Thus, before she became his wife, did the Emperor insist on honouring "the daughter of the Cæsars" even in the person of her future son.

### **His Plans for the Future.**

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Berthier was sent to make the official offer of marriage and to be present at the wedding ceremony which was to be celebrated in the first place in Vienna, and to bring back the new Empress to Paris. The Marshal, by the irony of fate, recently created Prince of Wagram, arrived in Vienna on the 4th of March, 1810. On the 11th of March, in St. Stephen's Cathedral, the Archbishop of Vienna blessed the union of the Archduchess with the Emperor of the French, who had, in his life, insisted on being represented by his old adversary of Wagram and elsewhere, the Archduke Charles. The Viennese Court, and the whole of Viennese society, attended the ceremony with a show of jubilation; and the weak and colourless Francis II—"that carcass," as Napoleon had dubbed him in 1805—for once looked radiant. A few yards from the Cathedral, the crypt of the Capucines had for the last half-century stood open to receive the bodies of members of the tragic House of Habsburg;

### **The Ceremony in Vienna.**

## THE EMPEROR'S MARRIAGE

scarce twenty-three years were to pass ere a little grave was dug within its precincts for the child snatched away from France, the only son born of this marvellous marriage—Napoleon II, Duke of Reichstadt.

Marie Louise left Vienna on the 13th of March and, after having been welcomed on the frontier of the Empire, that is to say of Bavaria, by a whole French mission headed by Caroline Murat, Queen of Naples, she proceeded, with a set smile on her lips, towards old France. From Strassburg she left for Compiègne, where the Court was awaiting her. But at the posting-house at Courcelles she saw the door of her carriage flung open by impatient hands and a man entered and sat down beside her. He took her in his arms and kissed her. She allowed him to have his way with her, and, on arriving at Compiègne, again allowed him to have his way, and consummate the marriage. The next day when the Emperor left the Empress's room at midday he displayed an obvious desire, rare in him, to find a confidante. "Marry a German, my dear fellow," he observed to one of his intimates. "They are the best women in the world, good, simple and fresh as rosebuds." It was no longer a case of "the daughter of the Cæsars," and the nature of the Emperor's rapture had changed.

The Court was staggered by this violent onslaught; it reminded them of the Emperor's war tactics—*à la soldade*, as Montluc would have said. His behaviour cannot have been displeasing to Marie Louise. "I find *he* improves very much on closer acquaintance," she afterwards wrote to her father. "There is something very taking and very impulsive about him which it is impossible to resist." Ever since Rivoli Austria had known this to her cost. The only drawback was that, as he had not introduced himself to her as a proud and dignified ruler, she no longer regarded him as Cæsar but as Romeo, with the result that she endeavoured to divert him from his life-work with all the strength which the memory of her first night lends to a woman who remains "fresh as a rose."

\* \* \* \* \*

The double wedding ceremony was fixed for the 1st and 2nd of

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

April, the civil marriage taking place on the 1st and the religious on the 2nd. The former was celebrated at Saint-Cloud, quite simply in the presence of the family, the second in the Louvre, also quite simply in the presence of the Court. This comparative privacy can only be explained by the fact that the Emperor was suffering from an acute attack of "aristocratism"; he had always felt a secret repulsion for crowds, even when they acclaimed him, but had hitherto been able to conceal his feelings. Now, however, he excused himself on the ground that "a daughter of the Emperors" should be kept at arm's length from the multitude and its lack of restraint. This showed that a change, which I cannot help regarding as inauspicious, had taken place and was destined gradually to alter the whole character of the régime.

It was no doubt for this reason that he avoided passing through Paris when, on the 30th of March, he and the Empress made their way from Compiègne to Saint-Cloud, where, on the 1st of April, Cambacérès proceeded to conduct the civil marriage in the presence of the imperial family, and that he also curtailed the route when, albeit with full pomp and ceremony, the procession of coaches and carriages left Saint-Cloud for the Tuileries. The Empress, after passing through the Arc de Triomphe, in the shape of a huge edifice of wood and painted canvas representing the future monument, proceeded straight to the Palace *via* the Champs-Élysées and the Place de la Concorde. However, the crowds that collected all along the route were so dense that there was hardly room to breathe.

Inside the Tuileries and the Louvre another crowd had gathered, but it was entirely composed of people who had the entrée to Court. It was before the eyes of these privileged persons, whose numbers, as a matter of fact, were extremely large, that the procession of well-nigh overwhelming magnificence passed by. The Princess, in dazzlingly gorgeous array, looked unhappy; she advanced stiffly, with blazing, almost hectic cheeks, beneath the not altogether benevolent gaze of the Court. And, indeed, prejudice was far from being silenced. "Some, and they were the majority," writes one of the witnesses of this historic scene, "regretted Josephine; others regarded the arrival of an Austrian

## THE EMPEROR'S MARRIAGE

Princess as an evil omen. Nearly all of them, tired of war, triumphs and conquests, had adopted the attitude of not being satisfied with anything. Moreover, the crowd seemed to be attending this splendid festival merely out of mechanical curiosity."

The blessing on the marriage was pronounced in the *Salon carré* in the Louvre, transformed by Fontaine, the architect, into a white-and-gold chapel, in which barely four hundred guests could be accommodated.

The imperial couple sat on thrones on a platform beneath a canopy; round them were the stalls reserved for the Cardinals and Bishops, while the Princes of the House were seated on chairs and the representatives of the constituent bodies on benches. The Emperor's face, which a moment before had been all smiles, suddenly changed, and during the rest of the ceremony his expression was set and stern; for out of the thirty-two stalls, reserved for members of the Sacred College then in Paris (where the majority of the Roman Cardinals were, willy-nilly, residing) twenty-one remained unoccupied. This meant something more than a protest against the annexation of Rome; it constituted, and the Emperor was aware that it constituted, an insulting declaration that the Church of Rome regarded the Metropolitan's dissolution of his first marriage as nul and void; would the child born of the second marriage be a bastard, then, in the eyes of these priests? Incensed beyond measure, the Emperor's one thought was to make them pay dearly for the insult.

Meanwhile, Cardinal Fesch was giving his blessing to the newly-married couple. After the *Te Deum*, the procession once again passed through the galleries of the Louvre and made its way back to the Tuileries before the eyes of the same privileged crowd. At six o'clock the imperial family and all the Court dignitaries assembled at a grand banquet. It was after this gathering that, in response to the ever more vociferous shouts of the real crowd surging round the palace, the imperial pair at last appeared on the balcony.

Whereupon the Guards corps massed in the Carrousel began to

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file past. And this was perhaps the most thrilling moment of the whole proceedings, even for the Emperor. **The Enthusiasm of the Guards.** The men, shouldering arms, waved their left hands frantically, and a wild vociferous shout of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" thundered out from every rank. Here indeed was a great love! Little did those rough soldiers care whether Marie Louise were beautiful or ugly; they even forgot that she was the daughter of the ancestral foe. Enough that she was *his* wife, the woman who would bear a son to their god!

A curious incident also created a pleasant surprise. Metternich, who was now Austrian Chancellor, was acting as his Emperor's representative at the marriage. With the rest of the diplomatic corps he had been invited, after the ceremony, to partake of refreshments in one of the rooms in the palace, and going up to the window, with his glass of champagne in his hand, he looked down on the swarming crowds below. "*To the King of Rome!*" he exclaimed, raising his glass; and the people replied with an enthusiastic outburst of cheers. He was the representative of that "apostolic Emperor" who, as head of the Holy Empire, had borne the title, but lately abolished, of King of the Romans, and this toast which, together with the Holy Empire and the Holy See, wiped out the whole of ancient Christendom, was regarded by the subjects of the new Master of the World as audaciously opening up a glorious future. What would the most hardened optimist have thought had he been able to see into recesses of the wily diplomat's brain! "Ah! Metternich, you have betrayed me!" exclaimed Napoleon in 1813, when he was attacked in the rear by Austria, after Russia, alienated by the marriage of 1810, had hurled the whole of Europe against France.

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"He had wedded treachery," writes Albert Vandal. This is perhaps an exaggeration. But certain it is that this marriage, quite apart from the incongruous personality of Marie Louise, was eminently calculated to lead to the gravest consequences, which, as we shall see, were generally far from felicitous.

The first of these—and the least to be deplored—was the

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termination of the Emperor's family policy. The Bonapartes, by agitating for divorce, had hastened their own doom. We already

**The Bonapartes Dispossessed.** know the various reasons which had alienated the Emperor from his own kith and kin, the disillusionment, the disappointment he had suffered at their hands. To all this another and far

stronger sentiment was now added. By his marriage the Great Man might presumably count not only on one son, but several sons being born to him. And it was to these sons that the Emperor had already, in his mind's eye, destined the government of areas which, in a sense, lay outside his own vast Empire. "The apanage of the French Princes" was the heading of one of the paragraphs of the *Senatus Consultum* of January 1810. These "French Princes," however, were no longer the brothers, but the sons of the Emperor. And it was on their heads that the Crowns would one day be placed. The race from which Napoleon had sprung and on which he had hitherto lavished all his affection seemed already to be giving way, in his imagination and his heart, to the race which, born of his own loins, would alone reap the reward of Empire.

But in this conception there lurked danger, not only for the unfortunate Kings whose titles were menaced, but also for the Emperor himself. The annexations that had led to the foundation of the Empire had resulted in the sudden perilous extension of the imperial Government, already much too unwieldy, as well as of the frontiers of France, which had been unduly far-flung. In any case, the sword of Damocles was now suspended over the Bonaparte family. With Lucien definitely cut off, it seemed as though Louis alone would be sacrificed. But, as early as the spring of 1810, the Emperor had already made up his mind that, sooner or later, Joseph, Jerome, the Murats, and the rest of them were all to go.

This would have been the result of any marriage; but being an Austrian marriage it had yet further consequences.

The old French disputes were a matter of complete indifference to Marie Louise, for she knew nothing whatever about them;

**Changes due to the Marriage.** furthermore, had not the Emperor sworn in all sincerity that his marriage would in no way alter his policy towards the various parties who were outbidding each other for his favour? But there is something



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stronger, above all in France, than the will of the strongest Sovereign, and that is the pressure brought to bear by events which have created an illogical situation. The niece of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette had been enthroned in the Tuileries; "Nothing is changed," declared Napoleon. "As soon as the Empress arrived here she played her first game of whist with two regicides, Monsieur Cambacérès and Monsieur Fouché." This was perfectly true. The Emperor had insisted upon it, with the express object of proving that "nothing had changed"; but this did not prevent the two regicides from going hot and cold all over, so to speak, during that terrible game of whist. And it did not prevent Fouché, the more deeply compromised of the two, who until then had managed time and again to escape dismissal by the skin of his teeth, from being removed before four months had passed, while Cambacérès was more than ever relegated to the background. Meanwhile the Tuileries, and before long the administrative posts, began to be filled with the sons and daughters of the courtiers of Versailles, and sometimes even by the children of victims guillotined during the Terror. Marie Louise herself was in no way responsible, nor did she influence Napoleon's policy. But, as we shall see, it was none the less true that his domestic policy, in spite of all that may be said to the contrary, did actually undergo a change and develop in such a way that the régime was transformed and, as I shall show, not to become more securely established.

Nor in the spring of 1810 did the Emperor admit that the arrival of Marie Louise was bound to exercise a decisive influence on his foreign policy. Yet, in that same year, one of Fouché's agents wrote: "War with Russia is the inevitable result of His Majesty's marriage."

**War with  
Russia  
Inevitable.**

If, while it made shipwreck of the Russian alliance, the marriage had led, possibly for the first time, to one of the old European Powers—in this case, Austria—frankly disarming and cordially supporting the new French Empire, there might perhaps have been some excuse for it. But we know to-day what Metternich's sentiments were when he urged the marriage, and the bitter hatred the Austrian Chancellor still cherished against the new France and above all against the Master who ruled her. The

## THE EMPEROR'S MARRIAGE

alliance which this dangerous diplomat intended to secure by the marriage had a twofold object—if Napoleon continued to hold Europe in subjection, Austria would be compensated for the cruel losses she had suffered during the last ten years; but if it drove Napoleon into a conflict with Russia, in which his fortunes became compromised, the tables could be turned upon him at an opportune moment, and after having been lured on by friendly assurances, he could the more easily be dealt a knock-out blow.

Marie Louise, who always remained ignorant of Metternich's secret plans, did not further them in any way. Nevertheless, in 1813, the marriage had realised Metternich's fell design; and this explains Albert Vandal's assertion when he says that Napoleon not only, as Canova declared, "divorced his Good Fortune," in December, 1809, but also, in April, 1810, "Wedded Treachery."

**Napoleon had  
"Wedded  
Treachery."**

SOURCES. *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XXII). Lecestre, *Lettres inédites* (II). *Correspondance de l'Empereur Alexandre avec la grande-duchesse Catherine*. *Portefeuille de la comtesse d'Albany*. Mallet du Pan, *Lettres*. Joubert, *Correspondance*. Memoirs or Reminiscences by Barante (I), Pasquier (I), Beugnot (I), Pontécoulant (III), Metternich (I), Comte de Damas (II), and Comtesse Potocka.

WORKS. Those already mentioned by Sorel, Vandal, Masson, Madelin (*Fouché*), and Lanzac de Laborie (III). Masson, *Marie Louise*. Gachot, *Marie-Louise intime*. Masson, *Napoléon et son fils*. The Grand-Duke Nicholas, *Relations*.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE "REACTION" OF 1810

The nobility rally to the Emperor. He aims at forming a Court of "great names" round Marie Louise. Opposition from various quarters. The "monarchical forms." Reaction organised without the Master's intervention. The attitude adopted by Fontanes. Reaction against the memories of the Revolution. Certain institutions revived. The reactionary spirit in the University. The regicides believe themselves to be menaced. The Emperor is determined to retain them but is inclined to be less lenient towards them. The fall of Fouché on a charge of surreptitious intrigues with England. He defends himself against the reactionaries, who attack him. He is dismissed from office and replaced by Savary. The latter in favour of reaction and actively hostile to "all that remains of the Revolution." The Emperor obliged to moderate his zeal. As a result of all this the régime is weakened.

"AS the husband of Marie Antoinette's great-niece, Bonaparte called Louis XVI 'uncle' so glibly that it required the most hardened loyalty to resist this far-fetched claim of legitimacy." Such were the words with which the vitriolic Frénilly sarcastically described and condoned the movement which, in 1810, attracted to the Emperor the members of "the old nobility" who had hitherto held aloof.

As a matter of fact, the movement at this juncture was merely accelerated; it had begun as far back as the early days of the Consulate, but until 1804 even those whom the amnesty had brought back to France had adopted an extremely cautious attitude towards the Master; in fact, it amounted almost to one of profound, though more or less passive hostility.

At first Napoleon had been irritated rather than vexed by their behaviour. His feelings towards the "old nobility" were and always remained extremely complex. Although he himself had pretensions to noble birth ("We nobles," he observed to d'Andigné in 1800), he had in his youth joined the ranks of those who despised the "ci-devant" *émigrés* and were determined to keep them out of the country for ever. But, when he became Consul,

**Napoleon's  
Attitude  
Towards the  
Old Nobility.**

## THE "REACTION" OF 1810

he quickly came to the conclusion that since he was creating a "national Government" it would be illogical to persist in ostracising a whole class of Frenchmen and treating these once privileged members of society as pariahs.

He had no love for them; as a body they inspired him almost with antipathy tinged with a certain contempt. Their frivolous attitude offended him. "It is not in keeping with my own seriousness," he observed to Roederer. But he could not put them out of his mind, and contemporary records contain innumerable instances of his obsession with them. The "Faubourg Saint-Germain," he declared, was never a matter of indifference to him. He found the hostility of "that class" disagreeable and, moreover, inexplicable, especially since it found vent only in *lazzi*; for he would have understood active hostility better than this futile mockery. As a matter of fact, he was anxious to win their support for his régime and even to attach them to his person.

The vanity of the upstart and the pride of the despot, say some. But, in my opinion, this had very little to do with the aim which, after 1804, he made less and less effort to conceal. In rebuilding France, he had, as I have already pointed out, shown the deepest concern for the country's past; in the new structure the "great names" which, in his opinion, stood for extremely ancient services rendered, had a definite niche reserved. For though he had no love for "the nobles," he held "nobility" in high esteem. "These names," he declared, "belong to France, to History; I am the

**His Wish to  
Retain Them.**

custodian of glory; I shall not allow them to perish." He meant that although deprived of the privileges their ancestors had been granted in return for services once rendered to their country "that class . . . did not deserve to perish"; nay more, by collaborating in the glorious national work, they would become incorporated in the new society, and, to use his own expression, become firmly rooted in it.

This "fusion," to which he so often referred, was an essential part of his "system," the corollary of the "reconciliation" brought about under the Consulate, and, when all is said and done, one of the noblest conceptions with which he has ever been credited.

Moreover, there is no denying that the lustre these historic names shed upon his Court was a further source of satisfaction to him, more especially as he was on the eve of making a daughter of

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the Habsburgs his wife. "They have been trained *to serve*," he used to declare. But on his lips the word "serve" was entirely free from the tinge of contempt with which it is commonly associated. He meant not only service at Court, but, among other things, the service which he valued above all others, the service of arms. And none of the nobility were more highly favoured by him than the young men who, following in the footsteps of such early recruits to his standard as Philippe de Ségur and Montesquiou-Fézensac, had refused to allow the names they bore to bar their road to glory. Moreover, he looked with hardly less benevolent an eye on those who gradually separated themselves from the main body of their hostile caste, and accepted administrative posts under him.

\* \* \* \* \*

But until 1809, the movement had made but slow progress. Some were driven by necessity, some by love of pleasure and the attractions of Court life, a few, like Victor de Broglie and Camille de Tournon, were anxious for work, a goodly proportion were lured by their hereditary vocation of arms, and lastly a small number succumbed to the charm of the wonderful man who was now master of France, with the result that a few hundred *ci-devants*, nearly all of them extremely young, had, in one way or another, given their support to the new régime between 1800 and 1809. And so unflinching was their determination that even the execution of the Duc d'Enghien had only acted as a temporary check on the movement.

As early as 1804 a few great names had already shed their lustre on the new Court, the list being headed by a La Rochefoucauld as maid-of-honour, and a Rohan as almoner to the Empress. But the presence of four *ci-devant* Chamberlains and six or seven "real" ladies-in-waiting was still something to boast about, while one or two Prefects with a "*de*" to their names, a mere drop in the ocean of the vast imperial administration, were referred to with pride. More numerous were those who—all honour to them!—rallied to the support of glory by joining the new army even as early as the Consulate, but above all during the first years of the Empire. Napoleon, as I have already observed,

## THE "REACTION" OF 1810

always held them in high esteem for having done so, and saw that they gained rapid promotion. These first adherents—officers, *auditeurs* in the Council of State, mere sub-Prefects, Chamberlains or petty Government officials—constituted the advance guard of a whole host of people, sometimes actually playing the part

of guides and leading brothers, cousins and even parents into the fold. The "Faubourg" was

**Narbonne's Conversion.**

horrified when the *ci-devant* Comte de Narbonne, an ex-Minister and favourite of Louis XVI, suddenly went over and became aide-de-camp to the Master. Many of these recruits deliberately tried to give the impression of having been forced, and Madame de Chateaubriand had some cutting remarks to make about these people who "succeeded in being forced by force of solicitation."

**The Pretext Advanced by the Old Nobility.**

Some—Pasquier, for instance, on being made a member of the Council of State—without actually putting forward the plea of having been "forced," justified themselves to their order by maintaining that they were serving their class and the ideas for which it stood by accepting positions which but for their "devotion" would have been given to "Jacobins."

Nevertheless, after Tilsit, the Emperor was surprised that the dazzling glory before which a Romanoff had bowed his head with such apparent alacrity had not resulted in securing him a larger batch of new adherents. And on the 31st of December, 1808, he ordered Fouché to draw up a list of the "principal families" for the purpose of choosing from it a number of young men who would *ex officio* be sent to Saint-Cyr. "The next generation," he wrote, "must not suffer for the hatreds and petty passions of the present generation." His whole intention, summed up in these words, led to his entering on a new path.

Furthermore, on his return from Wagram he had heard one of the German Kings express surprise that the Emperor of the French should have so few representatives of the old French nobility about him. He had been piqued by the remark, and had forthwith issued a decree appointing a hundred sub-lieutenants

**A Shower of Commissions.**

of noble birth. Having acquired the taste, he continued, and what the Comte de Mérode described as a "shower of commissions" began to pour down on the Faubourg. This amounted, in the majority of

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cases, to compulsion to serve, but the new officers became attached to the Master and even more devoted to the cause of glory. As one of the de Mailllys, who received his commission in this way, subsequently wrote: "My grandsons will be as proud of my services under Napoleon as our ancestors were of the Crusades."

This constitutes one of the glorious pages in the history of this rally. There were others not so glorious. Uniform ennobles the most noble; livery is less likely to do so.

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By the end of 1809 it had become necessary to prepare a new Court for the Princess, whether Romanoff or Habsburg, whose arrival was awaited. As a matter of fact, the mere appearance on the scene of an Empress who was what the Germans call "*hochwohlgeboren*" was enough to justify a further rally and, in any case, to afford ample excuse for the fresh adherents. The "Faubourg" had now given up the Bourbons in despair, and old people were no longer altogether displeased to see their sons-in-law presenting themselves at the Tuileries. Even abroad, Roger Damas, the most inveterate "die-hard" *émigré*, exclaimed, "Why is he not a Bourbon!" and some of the "amnestied," who, like the Duc de la Force, had remained in foreign service, came back to France and begged for a commission. And what of those who, for the last six years, had, as a rule, been restrained merely by regard for their neighbour's opinion and public comment? If they were invited, how could they possibly refuse, however much the invitation might savour of command?

It was in December, 1809, after the Austrian marriage had been decided upon, that, without consulting the parties concerned, the Emperor published a long list of persons promoted to be Chamberlains in the imperial service, all men of high birth. Not a single great name remained unrepresented in this famous  
**The "Gilded Conscription."** "gilded conscription," and at the head of the thirty noble Chamberlains—a regular French Debrett—the Comte de Montesquiou, who had taken Talleyrand's place a year previously, at last felt at his ease. The ladies waited until the very eve of Marie Louise's arrival, when another "gilded conscription" took place, which this time, however, included ladies of the imperial aristocracy. In order to make the "fusion"

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a reality, this magnificent body, recruited from both the old and the new nobility, was placed under the supreme control of the Duchesse de Montebello, wife of Marshal Lannes, while complete equilibrium was restored when the Comtesse de Montesquiou was appointed, long before the birth of the little prince, "Governess to the children of France."

Moreover, in addition to filling posts at Court, the old nobility, after 1809, accepted many other positions both administrative and military. By granting rapid promotion, Napoleon aimed not only at recognising brilliant gifts, but also at rewarding the "courage" of the young *auditeurs* of noble birth who now filled the Council of State and who, like the *ci-devant* Comte de Tournon, and Molé the *ci-devant* Comte de Champlâtreux, had already risen to high positions. The list of such *auditeurs*, who were shortly to be given important prefectures, was almost as "gilded" as the list of Chamberlains; and—to Napoleon's intense delight—these *auditeurs* and *maîtres des requêtes* worked in perfect unison with the "old" councillors who belonged to a very different "aristocracy," men like ex-citizens Merlin de Douai, Boulay de la Meurthe and Réal. Fusion had been achieved!

### Fusion Achieved.

### The "Conscription of Maidens."

But the Emperor hoped to make it even more complete by encouraging inter-marriage between "the two aristocracies"; indeed, he went rather too far, and literally forced "noble heiresses" into the arms of his *parvenu* generals and officials. This "conscription of maidens," which gave rise to so many tragi-comedies and even farces, deserves to be discussed.

Generally speaking, the old nobility were now a party to the "fusion." But there was still some resistance due to a fine old die-hard spirit. One group in particular, consisting of extremely brilliant members of very old families, the La Rochefoucauld-Doudeauvilles, Mathieu de Montmorency and his kinsman, Alexis de Noailles, stubbornly refused to submit. Moreover, the provincial aristocracy proved less amenable than the Parisian members of their order, while some of the early converts to the Empire were found returning to the enemy's camp if, like Comte François de La Bourdonnaie, they had not been rewarded sufficiently

### Remnants of Opposition.



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handsomely for their "evolution" and accordingly imagined they were entitled to "de-rally," so to speak.

La Bourdonnaie's ambition was to be a Senator, but it was precisely into the Assemblies that the Emperor hesitated to introduce representatives of the nobility who a moment ago had been Royalists. True, Senator Claude de Beauharnais, on being sent from Paris to La Vendée, in 1811, to preside over the activities of the Electoral Colleges, assured the Prefect that the Emperor was anxious for "aristocrats" to be elected, "and above all no lawyers." But Beauharnais, whose relationship to the Empress Josephine had made him one of the first to rally to the Empire, had his own private reasons for advocating this policy and perhaps exaggerated or imagined the Master's "wishes." As

**Napoleon's** a matter of fact, Napoleon, far from encouraging  
**Hand Forced.** the Electoral Colleges to adopt this attitude, was much more concerned about restraining them; for it was they themselves who, under pressure of public opinion, were inclined to return, if not "aristocrats," at least those who favoured reaction. If we wish to understand the transformation that took place in public opinion rather than in the policy of the Master between 1800 and 1813, we could not do better than follow the example of patient local historians, and study the change in the type of representative sent by the Electoral Colleges to the Legislative Body during those thirteen years. The old revolutionaries elected in 1800 were gradually replaced by *ci-devants* or their friends. Napoleon, I repeat, had his hand forced; he was too mistrustful of the Assemblies to introduce such uncertain elements into them.

Moreover, we must not attach undue importance to this rally on the part of the nobility. True, it was not barren of results, but it was itself merely one of the consequences of that change in public opinion which, during the years 1809, 1810, and 1811, dragged the régime itself in its wake.

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When, in 1804, "the Republic had been made man," those about the new Emperor had been able in all sincerity to declare that the Republic had in no way been abolished; it had simply been given a leader who would remain faithful to the principles,

## THE "REACTION" OF 1810

the institutions and the men of the Revolution. But as the imperial power grew stronger it veered towards what the Emperor termed "monarchical forms," and as a logical consequence tended to rely ever more on the conservative elements in the nation. The year 1807 had, in this respect, marked a noticeable change in the attitude of the Master himself. His pride and pleasure in the Tilsit interview had been manifested at the time in a pronounced increase of despotism. It was then that the Tribunate, though beyond its name it had nothing reminiscent of the Forum, had been abolished and the Press kept under more severe control; but it was less a matter of stifling "the remnants of that restless and democratic spirit which had so long been agitating France" than of creating "monarchical institutions" round the throne. This, it will be remembered, had been the reason for establishing an "imperial aristocracy" for whose benefit the institution of entail had, in some measure, restored the right of primogeniture. But whatever the process by which so many old revolutionaries had been transformed into devoted servants of the imperial régime, the latter, as it became more and more monarchical, required a different type of men from those who, in 1792, had destroyed a throne. And herein lies the explanation of the rapid promotion to the highest positions of men like Champagny, Fontanes, Molé, Pasquier and Montalivet, to mention only a few. But while their swift rise to fortune may have been the result of Napoleon's new attitude, their presence in the councils of the Empire was certainly calculated to accentuate the new tone that had been introduced.

Others besides the Master, however, were responsible for the creation of this tone. Indeed, as we know, matters had long been tending towards it, for, ever since the fall of Robespierre, the reactionary movement had everywhere been gaining in strength.<sup>1</sup> Whereupon Bonaparte had made his appearance and instead of allowing it to run riot had placed it within bounds by meeting it in every possible way. But, by acting as arbiter, he had merely poured oil on the troubled waters without putting an end to either ideas or grievances. And in the end there remained in the country an extremely large majority of people who, without

<sup>1</sup> See Chapters XXXVI and XXXVII of *The Revolution*.

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being actually hostile to the principles and institutions of the Revolution, cherished a violent antipathy for all that had taken place between 1792 and 1799. And if many counter-revolutionaries lent their support to the régime as early as 1800, their object in so doing was not only to secure good positions for themselves, but also to draw the new system within their own sphere of influence and teach it the way it should go.

### **Support of Counter- Revolu- tionaries.**

And, indeed, as early as the first days of the Consulate, a frankly counter-revolutionary group had associated itself with the partisans of Cæsarism in order to place the imperial crown on the brow of the old soldier of the Revolution, being firmly convinced that the "virtue of the throne" would immediately make itself felt, and that, when once a dynasty had been established, its head would inevitably be forced to create a monarchical order of society about it. This monarchical order, they felt, should first be made paramount in the realm of ideas, and it was for this reason that Fontanes, one of their most energetic representatives, after having been a most assiduous worker for the establishment of despotism, immediately aimed at being made head of the new department of Public Education.

### **Fontanes and Public Education.**

Public opinion, it must be confessed, supported the "reactionaries," and after the Emperor's marriage declared itself almost overwhelmingly hostile to the memories of the Revolution and even on occasion in favour of the traditions of old France. It fancied it found encouragement in certain of the Emperor's acts which the latter himself regarded as being merely "reconstructive."

### **Reactionary Measures.**

Such was the interpretation they put, for example, on the official restoration of the Feast of Saint-Louis, although it was done in honour of Marie Louise. It regarded in the same light the replacing on the Porte Saint-Denis and the Porte Saint-Martin of the votive inscription to "Louis le Grand"—*Ludovico Magno*—as well as the proofs of esteem showered on those who had once defended the Bourbons. So much so, that a certain fair member of the Charette family was discovered begging, in all simplicity, for a post for her son-in-law on the ground that his family had shown great devotion to "the cause of the throne"—meaning the throne of the Bourbons.

## THE "REACTION" OF 1810

But, even more than such acts as these, did public opinion passionately watch the measures which sometimes did, indeed, seem to be paving the way for a return to the institutions of the *Ancien Régime*. The nobility had been restored and, as I have just observed, the revival of entail led to the establishment, up to a point, of the right of primogeniture. Coats of arms once more appeared on the fronts of the houses, and the revival of the guilds was seriously discussed. Moreover, after the reintroduction of indirect taxation, a return to the system of farming the taxes for the *droits réunis* was also mooted. When, in April, 1810, the appeal courts became "imperial courts," the ancient title of First President was restored; true, this did no harm to anybody, but, what was much more serious, it led before long, as we shall see, to a Minister persistently demanding that all the important posts in the magistracy should be reserved for old members of the *Parlements*. These were merely isolated incidents, but public opinion was perturbed in case they were the prelude to others. Some of those who believed in the principles of 1789 would have agreed with a certain petty bourgeois of La Vendée when he wrote: "A fat lot of good the revolution has done us if we are to go back to what we believed to be dead!" The statement is not devoid of gross exaggeration!

Nothing is more characteristic than the reorganisation of Public Education, the creation of the University, which was confided to Fontanes. He was thus charged with the task of directing the education of the rising generation, which was placed exclusively in his hands, for the University, of which he was the Grand Master, was given the monopoly of education. Even more of a monarchist than a Catholic, Fontanes was, as a matter of fact, concerned not so much with producing good Christians as well-disciplined subjects. As early as 1807 so great was his zeal to restore strict discipline that the Master himself was alarmed. "If I had not restrained him," he declared, "he would have given us the educational system of Louis XV . . . he would have tried to produce marquises." Truth to tell, it was not marquises that this believer in despotism wished to

Old  
Customs  
Restored.

Reorganisation  
of Public  
Education.

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

rear, but, as I have already observed, "good subjects." And doubtless he did not despair of being able, before many years had passed, to din into men's heads—for the benefit of the "fourth dynasty"—the idea of "divine right," for the first person whose help he asked was Vicomte de Bonald, who even at that time was well known for his mystically absolutist doctrines. When, in 1810, he accepted the seat offered him on the Council of the University, Bonald found already installed as his colleagues such men as Clausel de Coussergues, another ardent advocate of divine right, and Joubert, who, on being placed in charge of the general inspectors, instructed them to make it their sole mission to restore "order" in the schools destined to be the "country's bulwarks" against subversive doctrines. Frédéric Masson accuses Fontanes of having made the University "a hotbed of treason." But this is going too far. All he wished to do was to make it a hotbed of intellectual and political reaction; Louis XVIII on his restoration found it unnecessary to change a single one of Fontanes' colleagues in the higher posts, and the Minister of Education was able to boast of having supplied "the true monarchy" with a teaching body whose sole object it had been to prepare the pupils confided to its care by the "usurper" for the ideas that triumphed in 1814.

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That the favour accorded to Fontanes and so many of his friends should have perturbed, not to say alarmed, the majority of the revolutionary leaders, is comprehensible enough. But when they found that officials, both high and low, who, for various services rendered to the Republic, had, in the early days of the Consulate, found refuge in Government posts, were now daily and hourly being forced to go into retirement, their anxiety increased. As we know, the announcement of the Austrian marriage had led to a regular panic among the "regicides," which certain signs and rumours in the early months of 1810 had only served to increase.

"Behind the throne the Convention could catch a glimpse of its scaffold," wrote the notorious Mallet du Pan on the 21st of January, 1795. "And whether it placed upon it the young King,

## THE "REACTION" OF 1810

who was a minor, or a Prince of some collateral branch, or a foreigner, it felt that, even after the passing of years, the chosen occupant would not forgive the murderers of Louis XVI, and that even a usurper crowned by their own hands would not long allow himself to remain at the mercy of such benefactors." And indeed, as I have shown elsewhere, ever since 1793, any sign of reaction had always made the regicides tremble for their lives.<sup>1</sup> The country, whom the King's execution had scandalised more than was at first apparent, still felt a kind of horror—I mean even the least "Royalist" among them—of those who had "voted the death," and if many of the latter had worked heart and soul for the advancement of Bonaparte and the subsequent establishment of the Empire, it was in the hope that a master whom they had themselves set up would place his protecting arm between them and the menaces of public opinion.

Napoleon had always entertained a secret feeling of repulsion for them. And, as he himself became more the "monarch," his antipathy increased. When, in 1808, he had some cause for complaint against the "regicide" Saliceti, he exclaimed: "I would have him know that I have not the power to defend the wretches who voted for the death of Louis XVI against the contempt and indignation of the public." From that moment Thibaudeau, another regicide who had become a high functionary under the Empire, allowed his fears to become apparent; I have already pointed out how much the Austrian marriage had served to increase them.

**Napoleon's  
Secret Dislike  
of Them.**

The Emperor did his best to set such fears at rest. But in spite of all he could do, public opinion would not be silenced, and tendentious rumours began to circulate. "A secret article in the contract," it was declared, "expelled from Court and excluded all who had voted for the death of Louis XVI." On the 3rd of May, 1810, there was even talk of "a revision of Louis XVI's trial." Certain Prefects wrote saying that rumours had reached them from Paris to the effect that "the Emperor was going to exclude from Court and from all employment any person against whom the Court of Louis XVI had cause for complaint," which meant all the men of the Revolution. Such rumours were eagerly

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolution*, pp. 452-454.

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

seized upon; in any case, Fouché wrote with some bitterness to the Emperor: "The assurance of those who have constantly displayed hostility to the dynasty is patent to everybody."—"That faction," he added, "undoubtedly regards itself as supreme."

On hearing this the Emperor again shrugged his shoulders, and swore that no power on earth could force him to reaction of any kind. He had not the slightest intention of dismissing anybody to please Marie Louise, nor was she demanding anybody's head. On the contrary, he emphasised his esteem for the capacity of the men the Revolution had bequeathed to him, and when Beugnot insinuated that they might one day be profitably replaced, more particularly in the Council of State, by the *mattres*

*des requêtes*, nearly all of whom were counter-revolutionaries, he replied: "I know nothing about that; you were, all of you, in one way or another, children of the Revolution; you were tempered in its waters and emerged with a vigour that nothing can cool." He spoke in all sincerity and had not the slightest intention of depriving himself of such auxiliaries. As a matter of fact, he insisted on retaining nearly all of them—thirty-one "regicides" remained in office, not to mention other old Conventionals, and if he gave pensions to one or two servants of the former Kings, he also did the same by a miserable clerk whom Robespierre had made Minister for Foreign Affairs when the Terror was at its height. At this juncture he even made a show of reconciliation with Carnot, whom he had held at arm's length since 1804. When, soon afterwards, Chateaubriand wished to read before the Academy a paper in which, in connection with his predecessor Marie-Joseph Chénier, another "regicide," he anathematised the vote of January, 1793, the Emperor lost his temper. "How dare the Academy talk about regicides when I, who wear a crown and should hate them more than it does, dine with them and sit next to Cambacérès?"

True, the Emperor felt confident of not allowing himself to be influenced. But he actually was influenced more than he knew, and although he refused to regard it in that light, the fall of the man who more than any other represented the "regicide" revolutionaries, justified the fears of one side and encouraged the hopes of the other.

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## THE "REACTION" OF 1810

"Fouché voted for the death of Louis XVI," wrote Girardin on the 4th of June, 1810; "that explains his fall, and the further the Emperor departs from the principles of the Revolution, the more ready will he be to dismiss those reputed to have been responsible for it." **Fall of Fouché.** This was the fulfilment of Mallet du Pan's prophecy that he would "not long allow himself to remain at the mercy of such benefactors."

As a matter of fact, Fouché's fall was not entirely due to the cause to which, like Girardin, nearly the whole of France ascribed it. Nevertheless, it is difficult to believe that, even for the somewhat grave reasons advanced by the Emperor, the man would have been dismissed a year previously. In any case, it is incumbent upon us, for more reasons than one, to dwell upon it at some length.

At heart, nobody had been more deeply perturbed by the Austrian marriage, and all that it might bring in its train, than the Duke of Otranto. But having, time and again, escaped dismissal by the skin of his teeth, and imposed himself once more on the Emperor by dint of outstanding services, he hoped to succeed again by a further and even more brilliant achievement. **His Dislike of the Austrian Marriage.**

At all times an advocate of peace, his aim was nothing less than to secure peace with England through his own personal machinations. It required an almost insensate audacity to conceive the idea of conducting clandestine negotiations under such a ruler as Napoleon. **His Underhand Negotiations.** But having, in August, 1809, gone to the length of raising a civic army without the authorisation of the Master, he now, incredible as it may seem, actually contemplated making peace almost without his knowledge. It was with this object in view that, as early as November, 1809, he had sent Fagan, one of his secret agents, to London. The latter had succeeded in having an interview with the Marquis of Wellesley, at that time Foreign Minister. True, Wellesley had in the end refused to continue this equivocal negotiation, and the Duke of Otranto had been obliged to await another opportunity which had presented itself before many weeks had passed.



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

The Emperor having fully determined to dethrone his brother Louis—I shall return to this—had yielded to the entreaties of the unfortunate monarch and granted him a respite, but on one

**Napoleon and Louis.** condition—on his return to Amsterdam the King, through his Ministers, was to open conversations with London and put the fear of God into the

British Government by threatening the immediate complete annexation of Holland to France. Fouché, whom Napoleon himself had allowed to be present at his private confabulations with Louis, knew all about this provisional solution of their differences. A certain Amsterdam business man, named Labouchère, had been entrusted by the King of Holland with the task of approaching the Marquis of Wellesley; and the Minister of Police, without consulting the Emperor, had immediately summoned the Dutchman to Paris and authorised him to submit proposals less likely to wound the susceptibilities of England than a direct menace.

**Fouché Intervenes.** They had been partly suggested to Fouché by the notorious Ouvrard, who had based a colossal scheme of financial and commercial speculation on the success of this curious negotiation. Labouchère, under the impression, as a matter of fact, that the Emperor knew all about the business, had gone to London; but he too had been confronted by Wellesley with counter-proposals of such a nature that the Emperor, on being informed, retaliated with a violent ultimatum, which put a stop to everything and, as he thought, closed the incident.

Meanwhile, however, Fouché had induced Louis, whom this check had reduced to despair, to prolong the negotiations of which, as a matter of fact, he himself took practical control; through Labouchère, he made the most extraordinary offers, aiming at a regular world upheaval, since he dragged even

**Labouchère.** America in. These already sufficiently audacious proposals were supplemented on the part of Ouvrard, whom Fouché had sent on several occasions to Labouchère, by various highly speculative schemes suggested by that arch-adventurer's ever-fertile brain, with the result that these extraordinary negotiations dragged on for months. They were still in progress when, on the 27th of April, the Emperor, who happened to be in Antwerp during the

## THE "REACTION" OF 1810

course of a tour in Belgium, quite by chance caught sight of Ouvrard returning from Holland. He instinctively felt that the latter's presence in this part of the world was suspicious and informed Louis of his surprise. The King of

**Napoleon  
Discovers  
Fouché's  
Intrigues.**

Holland, honestly believing the Emperor to be in possession of the facts, did not hesitate to explain the reasons for Ouvrard's journeys. And thus, to his stupefaction, the Emperor learnt that negotiations he believed to have terminated had been prolonged for the last three months behind his back on the reckless initiative of his Minister of Police. This perfectly comprehensible stupefaction swiftly gave place to indignation, and from that moment Fouché's fate was apparently sealed.

Yet in the old days the Emperor had overlooked similar instances of what he termed "audacity" or "irresponsibility." On this occasion, however, it is impossible not to feel that his determination to dismiss him was based, consciously or unconsciously, on the conviction that the presence of the old terrorist proconsul did not fit into the framework of the new "monarchical order." And it seems more than likely that Fouché's "underhand dealings," as he called them, merely provided him with a fine excuse.

For the last six months—as was patent to all—Fouché had been more directly menaced than any of the other old revolutionaries by the growing reactionary spirit, the reason being that nobody was more detested by those in the Tuileries who had long been doing all in their power to encourage reaction. Ever since

**Fouché's  
Hostility to  
the "Counter-  
Revolution."**

the Consulate he had sedulously and consistently opposed the "counter-revolution," and had demanded a movement for shifting and even dismissing Prefects whom he considered overfriendly to the old nobility and the counter-revolutionary clergy, while it gave him the greatest satisfaction to hand on reports from other Prefects who were alarmed by the progress of reaction. This was the case, for instance, when the Prefect of the Deux-Sèvres gave voice to the anxiety felt by the new holders of public land who, though quite without foundation, were mortally afraid of "spoliation."

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

This attitude on the part of Fouché raised to boiling-point the hatred of those who for years had been lying in wait for the "man responsible for the Lyons massacres."

**Hatred of  
Fouché.**

The Ministers, one and all, detested this overpowering and at times inconvenient colleague, while some of the ministerial salons spent their whole time reviling the Minister of Police. Fouché replied to this campaign by endeavouring, in daily notes sent to the Emperor, to discredit his enemies, both new and old, and the bitterness of this counter-offensive is a measure of the violence which must have prompted the attacks directed against him. For the last three months they had redoubled in fury; the whole past of Fouché, "the unfrocked priest," the "regicide Conventional," "the Lyons murderer," was laid before the Emperor's eyes by enemies who grew bolder every day. Thus the matter of the London negotiations—grave enough, in all conscience—found Napoleon but little inclined to leniency.

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Napoleon returned to Paris from Belgium on the 1st of June, 1810. The very next day he summoned the Council, and as soon as the Ministers had assembled, sharply questioned

**Napoleon  
Examines  
Fouché.**

the Duke of Otranto. "So you make peace and war now!" he exclaimed in an extremely menacing tone. Fouché, brazening it out, replied that all he had done was, in accordance with His Majesty's expressed wishes, to approach the British Government. But the Emperor insisted. Fouché apparently became so agitated that, beside himself with rage, the Master exclaimed: "You ought to carry your head to the scaffold!" Whereupon, after ordering Savary to have Ouvrard arrested, he continued the session. That same evening Ouvrard was imprisoned at Vincennes and, on being questioned by Champagny, confessed everything.

On the following day, at an extraordinary meeting of the Council, from which the Duke of Otranto was excluded, the Emperor suddenly burst out: "What do you think," he demanded, extremely bitterly, of those present, "of a Minister who, without the knowledge of his Sovereign, has entered into communication with the foreigner, opened diplomatic negotiations on bases of his own creation, and thus compromised the policy of the State? What

## THE "REACTION" OF 1810

punishment is there in our codes for such underhand dealing?" As they all remained tongue-tied with terror, Cambacérès endeavoured to advise moderation. But the Emperor, interrupting him, brusquely dismissed the Council, and bidding only the Arch-Chancellor remain, informed him that he had just deprived Fouché of his portfolio and intended to make Savary Minister of Police. The Duke of Otranto had, as a matter of fact, at that very moment, received two letters from the Emperor. In the first, Napoleon, expressing himself, indeed, with the utmost moderation, merely informed him that he could no longer repose confidence in a Minister who, by his culpable levity, had abused it. The other letter, couched in official terms, made the fallen Minister Governor of the Roman States.

The two letters certainly seem to confirm the idea that the Emperor's anger was merely feigned; he was not really dismissing Fouché for disloyalty; he was ridding his Government of a Minister whose antecedents were beginning to embarrass him, but of whose acknowledged ability he still intended to make use. Fouché left office after having burnt or taken away all compromising documents. And his unflinching audacity was encouraged by the emphatically unfavourable reception with which his fall met in almost every quarter. I have given abundant proof of this elsewhere. Schwarzenberg, the Austrian Ambassador, in a report sent to his Court on the 6th of June, puts the whole matter in a nutshell. After summing up the reasons for which the Duke of Otranto was entitled to the confidence of all parties, he added: "It is indeed proof of the strange times in which we live that one of the most detested supports of the Committee of Public Safety should be followed in his fall by the universal regret of the whole country."

Savary's appointment only served to increase these regrets. The enemies of the régime regarded this superior gendarme as a brutal creature, utterly lacking in delicacy of feeling. They called to mind the part he had played in the execution of the Duc d'Enghien as well as in the fall of the Spanish Bourbons; while the Emperor's friends maintained that he was clumsy, not to say inefficient. "I believe," Savary himself wrote, "that the news of an outbreak of plague

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

would not have caused more alarm than my appointment."

Fouché turned this twofold expression of public opinion to account; he begged and obtained from the Emperor the title of Minister of State. In granting his request Napoleon made him undertake to leave Paris immediately, but also asked him to return the documents he had taken away. Fouché having three times refused to give them up, the Emperor in exasperation determined to humiliate him still further. He deprived him of the title of Minister of State as well as of the Governorship of the

**Fouché  
Retires  
to Aix.**

Roman States, and sent him orders to retire to his property at Aix, to which the ex-Minister was eventually obliged to resign himself. Such was the fall of the man who had played so important a part in the general policy of the Consulate and the Empire. Even if it were not really due to the reactionary movement, it took away a formidable obstacle from its path and consequently helped to strengthen it. In any case it seemed big with consequences for both the Emperor and the régime.

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"Fouché's exile and his replacement by Savary," wrote Roger de Damas, a few weeks later, "means a renewal of persecution and terror for France." Though the statement is grossly exaggerated, there is no denying that, together with ideas very different from those of his predecessor, Savary introduced far more brutal methods into that important institution, the Ministry of General Police. For the moment one point alone is of interest—if it were still possible to doubt the real nature of Fouché's fall, it would be made abundantly clear by the attitude assumed, from the very beginning, by his successor towards the growing reactionary movement.

Although he had sprung from the ranks of the revolutionary army, Savary was filled with a violent antipathy for the old supporters of the Revolution. Eager, on the other hand, to rally all the elements of the Right round the Master, whose blind and devoted adherent he had always been, he felt impelled to have recourse to friendly advances and, if necessary, weak indulgence, to win over the last refractory members of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

## THE "REACTION" OF 1810

Thus he had not been in office many months before he had a revision made of the list of Royalists whom Fouché had persuaded the Emperor to sentence to exile on a charge of seditious propensities, and secured their recall. On the other hand, Germaine de Staël, whom Fouché had allowed to return to the neighbourhood of Paris, was unceremoniously sent into regular exile again and "the Récamier woman" was also requested to keep out of the country. But he released the Abbé de Montesquiou from the supervision under which he had been kept, which enabled that gentleman to carry on his activities as the leading Bourbon agent in perfect peace and security; he also had Armand de Polignac, Cadoudal's old accomplice, transferred from his fortress to a "sanatorium," thus making it possible for that devoted servant of the Bourbons to make good his escape in January, 1814, to the great benefit of his patrons. "The Faubourg," observed Barante, "began to rely on Savary's good offices."

### **His Leniency Towards Royalists.**

Towards everything reminiscent of the Revolution, on the other hand, he displayed the utmost severity. Further restrictions were placed on the Press, and the newspapers were subjected to the severest regulations, "for their existence," wrote the new Minister, "is a remnant of the Revolution, and it seems only fair to organise them in accordance with the principles and forms of the Monarchy." Not only was the magistracy to be purged, but on the 9th of October, 1810, Savary demanded its complete renewal; as the old parliamentarians "asked for nothing better than to serve the Emperor," the last remaining "Jacobin" magistrates were to be replaced by men who would bring a very different spirit with them to "the bench." Savary's main object, however, was to rid himself of the old revolutionaries whom Fouché had installed in the Ministry of General Police. In short, before long it was found that the Duc de Rovigo was ordering the

### **His Severity Towards Old Revolutionaries.**

arrest, for no apparent reason, of all the old members of the revolutionary committees of 1793, including—so blinded was he by zeal—a number of poor wretches who had been dead for years. And his zeal did not cool, for in 1813, we more than once find Napoleon reproaching him for being "too much of a reactionary"; while, in 1814, Réal bitterly complained, in Savary's

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

own presence, that men whose energy in a mortal crisis would have been invaluable, had been parted from the Emperor and alienated from the régime.

Thus Savary's rise to power gave fresh impulse to the policy of reaction which Fouché's fall had rid of its most dangerous adversary. The crisis of 1810 was something more than a ministerial crisis; it was really a Government crisis.

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The reactionary movement, which placed representatives of the old ideas on the steps of the throne and even in the Emperor's council chamber, was indeed of the gravest consequence.

Not for one moment, as I have already observed, did Napoleon intend to play false to the principles of the Revolution; at that very moment he was imposing them upon the foreign countries united to his Empire. He even regarded the support given by the counter-revolutionary elements to his Government as a victory of the new ideas over the *Ancien Régime*. Moreover, the significance of these incidents was exaggerated; in 1810 and 1811 the measures

**Napoleon  
Discounten-  
ances  
Reaction.**

taken revealed merely tendencies, and there can be no doubt that at times the Emperor, if I may say so, reacted against reaction. "We must not be reactionary! . . . That stinks of reaction!"

he wrote right up to 1814. None the less the upholders of the Revolution might well feel anxious, inasmuch as the future, not to mention the present, was full of menace for them. From the union of the ex-General of the Revolution, now a proud sovereign, and the daughter of one of the most counter-revolutionary dynasties, a son would be born; surrounded from his very cradle by representatives of the ideas which were believed to be dead, in what spirit would this child grow up?

The fall of the Empire, following soon on the birth of the child, prevented these possibilities from being realised; but might it not be said that the fall itself had, in some measure, been brought about by the turn the régime had taken? While the old servants of the Empire had been ousted for the benefit of the new, or had voluntarily drifted away on coming into contact with them, from the point of view of ability and devotion, this new personnel could not hold a candle to those who were gradually being weeded

## THE "REACTION" OF 1810

out. The majority of the men and women of the *Ancien Régime*

### Weakness of the New Recruits to the Empire.

who rallied to the Empire were, or believed themselves to be, sincere; but as the descendants of the old servants of the Monarchy and brought up in horror of the Revolution, these erstwhile enemies, even if they had no intention of surrendering the stronghold to which they had gained admittance, yet defended it less resolutely precisely because it was not their own stronghold. It was here that the real danger lay. And the day came when some of the plebeian servants of the régime, both civilians and soldiers, who had become connected by ties of blood and friendship with these new recruits, followed them in their defection, and thus the "fusion," instead of having been a benefit, turned out to have been a disadvantage to the Empire. And, unfortunately, the reactionary movement, which gained in strength between 1810 and 1813, discouraged, if it did not actually alienate, those who, ever since 1800, had been its most staunch supporters—the men of the Revolution. As Regnaud de Saint-

### Dejection of the Old Revolutionaries.

Jean-d'Angély wrote to an old colleague of the Constituent, they now felt an extremely small and insignificant band about the Emperor, the devoted servants, as he put it, of "the revolutionary school," whose place, he added, had now been taken by "the imperial school."

Little by little the Empire born of the Revolution was shorn of its real strength when, soaring aloft in pride and exultation, it lost touch with its antecedents. This happened when the Austrian marriage, having precipitated the crisis which was to overwhelm it, forced it for the moment to confront difficulties which were bound, sooner or later, to make it embark on the venture that ended in its doom.

SOURCES. *Correspondance de Napoléon, passim* and XXII. Lecestre, *Lettres inédites* (II). *Almanach Impérial*, 1809 and 1810. Joubert, *Correspondance*. Mallet du Pan, *Correspondance*. Memoirs and Reminiscences by La Rochefoucauld-Doudeauville, Mérode, Frénilly, the Comte de Damas (II), Roederer, Madame de Rémusat, Bourrienne (VI), Madame de la Tour du Pin (II), Molé, Caulaincourt, Savary, Broglie, Ségur, Méneval, Pasquier, I, Montesquieu-Fézensac, Madame de Staël (*Dix ans d'exil*), Barante, I, the Comtesse Potocka, and Madame de Chateaubriand.

WORKS. Those already mentioned by Lanzac de Laborie (III, IV, V), Madelin (*Fouché*), Forneron, and Masson (*Joséphine*, III; *Marie-Louise, Famille*, VII). Giraud, *Chateaubriand*. Cassagne, *Vie politique de Chateaubriand*. De Broc, *La Société*. Bardoux, *Madame de Custine*.



## CHAPTER XXXVI

### EUROPE AFTER THE MARRIAGE

The Tsar mortified; he is haunted by the idea that Napoleon intends to restore Poland. Russia "becomes the frontier of France." Napoleon fears and wishes to avoid a conflict with Russia. He believes that his marriage has secured lasting peace in Europe; his twofold illusion. Prussia completely abased. Austria feigns friendship, but public opinion there remains hostile; the Tsar determines to exploit this attitude in order to win over Austria to himself. The alliance proves irksome to Alexander; the Polish question. England begins to feel the weight of the Blockade; it proves a grievous handicap; the Opposition in London demands the evacuation of Spain. Napoleon anxious to annex Holland, "an English province." Louis succeeds in postponing the step. The negotiations of 1810 with England. Napoleon makes up his mind to annex Holland and to have done with Spain.

**T**HE marriage had made a great sensation in Europe, where, except for London and St. Petersburg, it had at first been extremely favourably received. Metternich's toast "To the King of Rome!" was regarded as the recognition of the Napoleonic hegemony by all that was most monarchical in Europe—so a certain Russian agent bitterly remarked.

As a matter of fact, St. Petersburg felt she had been struck a cruel blow. The Tsar was deeply mortified. The Austrian marriage shed a fierce light on Metternich's game, and Alexander, who, ever since 1805, had regarded Austria as nothing but an impotent rival in the Balkans, now felt that he had been doubly fooled—and through his own fault! His pride

**The Tsar's  
Attitude  
Towards the  
Marriage.**

had been deeply wounded and the pain was all the more intolerable, seeing that this very pride forced him to hide it and to meet with a smile an event which filled him with consternation. He was, indeed, confronted by the gravest problems. The Balkan question he still refused to deal with, the Polish problem continued to haunt him. Even if, at the time when he was still awaiting a favourable reply from the Tsar to his offer of marriage,

## AFTER THE MARRIAGE

Napoleon had appeared ready to examine the matter of Poland in a perfectly friendly spirit, he had nevertheless shown considerable irritation at Alexander's demands. What, then, would be his attitude after the marriage negotiations with St. Petersburg had been broken off? The Tsar's immediate circle was exasperated by the Austrian marriage, and even more alarmed than irritated. "The news has inspired universal terror," wrote Joseph de Maistre from St. Petersburg, "and, indeed, I can conceive of no more terrible blow for Russia. . . . She has suddenly become the frontier of France, for she has against her a natural alliance

**Russia the  
Frontier of  
France.**

which will soon develop into an offensive and defensive alliance and has reduced her to a cypher." Yes, strange as the expression may appear, Russia had indeed become the frontier of

France; between the Rhine and the Niemen there was no longer any buffer State, for if Austria, bound by ties of blood to the Emperor of the French, definitely formed part of his system, the Grand Duchy of Warsaw was no longer a perilous advance guard, but a formidable outpost. The two Emperors now found themselves face to face with nothing between them.

Napoleon, however, was anxious for the alliance to be preserved, and Champagny had been instructed to inform the various Governments that the Emperor's marriage had "in no way changed his relations with Powers that were friends and allies of France." He was perfectly sincere, for in his heart of hearts he was still very far from imagining that it was possible

**Napoleon  
Anxious to  
Preserve the  
Russian  
Alliance.**

for him to be dragged into war against his ally of

Tilsit. "I have no wish to end my days in his desert sands," he declared a few weeks after his marriage. Why should the alliance be broken? As a matter of fact, he had not the slightest intention of resuscitating the Polish nation, and he had also made up his mind, in accordance with the agreement of Erfurt, to allow the Tsar to go as far as the Danube in the Balkans, provided Russia also kept her part of the bargain and loyally excluded both English influence and English merchandise.

He was certainly sincere, but here, too, events proved stronger than men, and the Austrian marriage gave rise to a situation which overpowered both events and men's desires. For the moment

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Napoleon believed he had both peace and war in the hollow of his hand, and he was more than ever anxious for general peace.

If the marriage he had just contracted were to exercise any influence at all, he felt convinced that it would be in the direction of securing peace in Europe. Why had the Continent banded together against him? Obviously because it regarded him as

**He Hopes  
for Peace.** the heir of that Revolution which, by constituting a menace to royalty, had, long before he made his appearance, provoked an alliance of kings. Now,

however, not only had he restored a throne in France, but he had also summoned to share it with him the daughter of one of the most conservative dynasties in Europe. This marriage, in his opinion, should reassure not Austria alone; it should set at rest the qualms of all the dynasties. "Nothing seemed to me better calculated to allay anxiety than to ask for the hand of an Austrian princess," he wrote to Champagny, intending the statement for the ears of all Europe. And he believed in all sincerity that in making this declaration he was destroying all motive for the continuation of the war which, for the last seventeen years, Europe had been waging against France, and thus bringing it to an end. But he was doubly mistaken.

He was mistaken, in the first place, with regard to the real motives which had made Europe fall upon France in 1792 and 1793. As we know, Europe at that time had merely wished to profit by the anarchy in which she imagined France to be plunged, in order to dismember her; but France having transformed a heroic defence into a victorious counter-attack, Europe had continued the conflict with the sole object of regaining the territory which the young Republic had wrested from her during

**Europe's  
Attitude  
Towards  
Napoleon.** the course of this magnificent reaction. And Napoleon, by making constant additions to these conquests, appeared more formidable to the various European Governments than even the Revolution from which he had sprung. If he was no longer

the man of the Revolution, the "Robespierre on Horseback" he had been called, he was making himself the successor, though ten times more powerful and enterprising, of that Louis XIV against whom Europe had also constantly united. Against this dazzling power, vengeance might be postponed, but it could

## AFTER THE MARRIAGE

never be abandoned. If by any chance Russia, alienated from the Great Man, were one day to drag him into a new war, and this war were to turn out badly for "Bonaparte," the whole of monarchical Europe would inevitably be found returning to the idea of revenge and reprisal.

His second mistake lay in considering, at this juncture, only the dynasties and the chancelleries. Even if the Austrian marriage had disarmed all the latter, the Emperor would still not have finished with Europe. Writing at this very time, Roger de Damas declared that all the Kings having been defeated, it was two peoples who for the last seventeen years had alone known how to conquer—the French because they had rid themselves of their King and the Spaniards because they had had theirs taken away.

**Opposition  
of "the  
Peoples."** This remark, which comes strangely from the pen of an ardent Royalist, is typical of the last despairing hope placed by Napoleon's enemies in "the peoples." And indeed, having learned the lesson from Spain, the peoples of Europe, so long indifferent to the humiliations suffered by their Kings, were about to enter the lists in their support, and force them, if need be, to resist. Another Europe was being revealed which France had not yet encountered—the Europe of the Nations!

And it was not against the Emperor of the Revolution that this Europe was rising up. Many of these folk had long since hailed with approval the ideas for which the Revolution stood. It was against the "Despot" who, from Paris, held Europe cowed in his iron grip. And this revolt of the peoples prevented the Kings from laying down their arms and, when necessary, forced them to take them up again.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile Napoleon, full of hope, was making it clear that he was anxious for peace. Ever since 1805 the French troops had been in occupation of Germany, but relying on Prussia's protestations of submission and on the forthcoming alliance with Austria, the Emperor was recalling this "Army of Germany" to France, leaving only two divisions on the other side of the Rhine, one to hold the Hanseatic towns, where the Blockade had to be enforced, and the other to guard Westphalia, where Jerome had not

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

succeeded in providing himself with anything worthy of the name of army. The real object of these forces, however, was to keep watch on Prussia, who was still suspect, though this did not prevent

him from offering her fresh facilities for payment. In fact, he was making conciliatory advances in all directions, even to England, and these preliminary modifications having been introduced into his policy, he was waiting for Europe, convinced that she would loyally collaborate with him in securing what he felt should be the fitting results of his marriage.

Prussia, to all appearance, was completely humiliated, though she was groaning over the payment of a war indemnity, the whole of which she was hoping to be excused. In her heart of hearts she was champing at the bit, and was secretly circumventing the terms of the crippling Treaty of Tilsit. Although she was allowed to have only 20,000 men under arms, she had, as a matter of fact,

**Prussia's  
Bellicose  
Attitude.**

equipped 120,000 in a single year, by calling up all the young men in the kingdom for two months' service, and then sending them home armed, on the understanding that they were to continue their training with as much circumspection as possible. Thus an army was being prepared ready to be mustered at a moment's notice and wreak vengeance for Jena. But while waiting for this force to be sufficiently trained, Frederick William confined himself to humiliating protestations of love and even, surprisingly enough, of "gratitude." And he greeted the news of the second marriage with fulsome congratulations. The Emperor did not allow himself to be wholly deceived, though he regarded Prussia's attitude as a proof that Europe was calming down.

Naturally, the Austrian Government seemed inclined to be more enthusiastic in the cause of peace. Metternich, who, after the marriage, had stayed on in Paris for a time, had left the old Count, his father, in temporary charge of the Chancellery, after having duly primed him to do his utmost for the French alliance. But, before many weeks had passed, the two Metternichs came into

**Austria's  
Hostility.**

conflict with Austrian society, which, without any attempt at concealment, was welcoming the Russian agents with open arms, on the score that they were now "Napoleon's enemies." From Vienna this sudden

## AFTER THE MARRIAGE

recrudescence of hatred spread through every rank of society in Austria and even in Germany. The Tsar, not slow to be informed, saw an opportunity for swift revenge; he sent one of his diplomats, Alopeus, to Vienna, with instructions to make it known that the Russian Government, far from being hostile to the marriage, regarded it, on the contrary, as a reason "for establishing the closest friendship with the Emperor Francis"; and as a pledge of this renewal of friendship, Alexander declared himself ready to share the north of the Balkan Peninsula with Austria. Vienna gave this tempter an enthusiastic reception and brought such pressure to bear on old Metternich that he lent a favourable ear to all the wily Russian envoy had to say.

As a matter of fact, the Tsar was already weaving the first threads of a future coalition. Though he had not allowed it to become apparent in any way, the last few months had made him once again Napoleon's enemy, an even more inveterate foe than he had been on the eve of Friedland, so greatly had fresh grievances aggravated his old jealousy. Moreover, the alliance was becoming burdensome; above all, on account of the obligation it entailed of shutting the Russian Empire to British goods. Truth to tell, its ports had never been hermetically sealed against England, for ever since 1807 English merchandise had been entering Riga under false colours and flooding Europe from that quarter. Nevertheless, however flagrantly the Blockade regulations may have been infringed, the fact that it was, roughly speaking, effective was enough to hamper and almost to paralyse Russian trade and everyday life.

Russia had reaped her full harvest from the alliance. She was now in possession of Finland, and, on the Danube, Russian generals were on the eve of carrying all before them. Alexander was now dreaming of supplementing his conquests by another very different acquisition, and was entirely absorbed with the idea of restoring the ancient Kingdom of Poland in its entirety, this time to his own advantage, and placing it under the sceptre of the Romanoffs. While Finland and the Danubian principalities, however, had been conquered thanks to the timely "friendship" with Napoleon, the latter now constituted the obstacle to the realisation of his new dream.

### **The Tsar's Policy.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

The main cause of friction lay in this same Polish question. Napoleon found himself confronted by the convention which, it will be remembered, Caulaincourt had felt it incumbent upon him to sign and by the terms of which the Emperor undertook to prevent the resurrection of Poland for ever and by every means. Napoleon had been wounded by the wording of the document which he considered derogatory "to his dignity," and had sent the draft of an alternative treaty by which he merely undertook not to restore the Kingdom of Poland. It was despatched to St. Petersburg on the 10th of February, 1810.

The Tsar did not think it was strong enough, and after a month's delay, returned the original convention to Paris with hardly any modification of its terms. Kurakin, the Russian Ambassador, again presented the text to Champagny; whereupon the Emperor lost his temper. And when Kurakin himself returned to the charge, he became exasperated. "It makes one wonder," he exclaimed, "whether the Tsar is not seeking a pretext for a *rapprochement* with England." And he gave instructions for the Ambassador to be asked point-blank whether he was prepared to sign the counter-project which he regarded as amply sufficient to reassure the Tsar. The Russian declared that he had no power to do so, and the negotiations fizzled out without any settlement having been reached.

The impression produced in St. Petersburg was lamentable. The Tsar was convinced that his "ally" had slipped back to an attitude from which he had hoped to have weaned him once and for all. The result was that the alliance was mortally wounded. Napoleon, however, pretended to believe it was still very much alive, though he felt it would no longer be as useful to him as it had once been; for at this juncture he was more than ever hopeful of forcing England, whose situation he regarded as desperate, to capitulate.

\* \* \* \* \*

Her situation, though not desperate, was, indeed, extremely serious. The Blockade was ruining her far more effectively than is generally supposed. Although, by sailing under false neutral colours or by smuggling, she was still managing to get some of her surplus stocks, more particularly colonial produce, into the Continent,

**England's  
Lamentable  
Condition.**

## AFTER THE MARRIAGE

her warehouses were becoming more and more glutted with merchandise she could not dispose of. She had tried all manner of means to circumvent the Blockade—by issuing a new Order in Council obliging all neutrals to touch at an English port to pick up a sailing licence, she had hoped to induce these “genuine neutrals” to take goods aboard. But this draconian measure almost embroiled her with the United States, who, pending the assumption of a more energetic attitude, had, by the law of embargo, forbidden all vessels sailing under the American flag to appear in European waters. And in spite of all the ingenuity displayed by the English in trying to smuggle their huge surplus into the Continent—through Sweden and, above all, through Russia, not to mention Holland—they only succeeded in disposing of an ever more infinitesimal proportion. Stocks were piling up higher and higher in the docks; one by one the factories were closing down; and thousands of unemployed spread an atmosphere of the deepest gloom and misery, more especially since the Blockade was also menacing the country with famine.

Furthermore, the economic crisis had led to an extremely serious financial and monetary crisis. The sequel to the closing of factories was the failure of banks. Credit was undermined, paper money was depreciating, the pound sterling fell from 25 francs to 17, and was before long to reach the low record of 15. But yet worse was to be feared—a complete collapse of the currency. The subsidies paid to the various Coalitions had exhausted the Exchequer, and Spain was absorbing the reserves. Although the income-tax, which was constantly being raised, really hit only the wealthy, the “rich” were becoming less rich, and felt there was no reason why they should be forbidden to air their grievances any more than the poor.

Faced by these threats of ruin, public opinion in England began to waver. In Parliament the Opposition used this as a stick to belabour the Government, against whom its chief indictment was that too expensive an army was being kept in Spain. Wellington was reported to be winning brilliant victories in that country; but were they really so “brilliant,” since after each one of them he retreated to Portugal and dug himself in there? Spain was, indeed, a bottomless pit for England as well as for France; in a



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

single year £25,000,000 had been swallowed up there. The mass of the people were becoming "desperate"—the word **Dark Days** was used by an Englishman! The failure of the **for England.** Walcheren expedition, in which thousands of soldiers had perished miserably, was not calculated to raise the morale. Grenville and Grey, the leaders of the Opposition, were clamouring for peace. The Continent seemed to be worn out and no new Coalition appeared possible. Measures connected with the policing of the high seas were leading inevitably to a conflict with the United States. It was imperative to make peace. In their heart of hearts, not even the members of the Cabinet were all opposed to the idea, though they certainly faced an extremely difficult situation with admirable courage. Like Wellington, they appealed to "England's honour," and Parliament voted fresh supplies.

Napoleon remained unperturbed; he hoped to inflict some violent blows which would break down this stubborn tenacity. Having abandoned in despair all hope of opening serious negotiations, his one thought was to bring his obdurate foe to her knees. The first blow was to be the annexation of Holland to France.

"Holland is an English province," the Emperor had written, on the 17th of July, 1809, to his brother Louis. So flagrant, indeed, were the infringements of the Blockade that he suddenly took a step which, the King declared, would reduce Holland "to despair," and signed the decree which, by reason of the smuggling of English goods into Holland, forbade all commercial relations between the latter country and the Empire.

As a matter of fact, Napoleon had taken this step not only with the idea of making "an example," but also with the object of driving the hapless Louis to desperation, and inducing him to abdicate his throne. And he had summoned him to Paris for the express purpose of getting it back from him. The King had meditated refusing; but he was a weak-minded creature, and having made up his mind to go and plead his cause, he wrote a letter which he confided to one of the Tsar's aides-de-camp; in it this strange brother of Napoleon begged Alexander for "his powerful and generous support."

## AFTER THE MARRIAGE

On the 2nd of November, 1809, the Emperor met him with an ultimatum. Louis was to abdicate; if he wished it, he could have the Grand Duchy of Berg. The King, thunder-struck, called upon the whole family to intervene, and through them conveyed suggestions for a friendly settlement. His brothers and sisters, and even his mother, interceded for him. The unfortunate Louis had once been Napoleon's favourite and he was sorry for him now because he was ill. The King offered to persuade England to open negotiations, and this would have saved him. Napoleon agreed to the suggestion, with the object of giving his unhappy brother a last chance to keep his throne. Where-

**Louis  
Granted a  
Respite.**

upon the famous negotiations confided by the Dutch Government to Labouchère had been opened, and encouraged by Fouché, had cost the latter his portfolio. But as early as February, 1810, Napoleon saw that they had failed. Wellington, on being approached by Labouchère, interpreted the menaces made by the latter in the guise of proposals as a foolish and insulting attempt at intimidation and affected a supreme indifference to the prospect of the annexation of Holland to the Empire. She was already so closely bound to France, he declared, that England could take no interest in the sham independence she professed to enjoy. The Emperor, on being informed, dictated an extremely haughty note, full of further menaces, declaring that he, too, was no longer anxious to enter into negotiations, since he was in a position to drive the English into the sea off Spain whenever he chose to do so. And indeed he was making preparations to this end. As for Holland, since the struggle with England was to be continued, her fate had been definitely sealed in the Emperor's mind.

For SOURCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY see the end of Chapter XXXVIII.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### THE STRUGGLE WITH ENGLAND

Spain; anarchy; demoralisation of the rank and file and the High Command; Joseph flouted. The operations; the conquest of Andalusia; Napoleon aims at "driving the English into the sea." He annexes the northern provinces; Joseph rebels. Napoleon annexes Holland. The Tsar gives him cause for anxiety; Alexander prepares for war in 1811. Bernadotte elected Crown Prince of Sweden; the Tsar takes umbrage at this; Bernadotte's deplorable attitude. The Blockade; Napoleon himself creates a breach in it by the Trianon Decree. England holds her ground.

**T**O drive the English into the sea appeared to the Emperor even better calculated than the annexation of Holland to force the British Government to make peace. And, indeed, in the state of semi-demoralisation to which, as we have seen, the situation in Spain had reduced a certain section of public opinion in England, a disaster suffered by Wellington in the Peninsula would most probably have given rise to a violent reaction in London against the Government and led to the opening of real negotiations for peace. The Emperor was quite right in his estimate, and it is all the more surprising that he should not have decided to go to Spain himself and deliver the English this knock-out blow in person.

It will be remembered that this had apparently been his intention on returning from Vienna in October, 1809. Nevertheless, he had not gone; the divorce and the negotiations connected with the marriage had dragged on much longer than he expected and had delayed his departure as well as the preparations for the marriage itself. And during those six months everything had gone to bits on the other side of the Pyrenees.

For the French soldiers, Spain had indeed become a sort of pandemonium—"hell," as they described it in their letters—and from the High Command to the most valiant of the rank and file, one and all were becoming demoralised, almost to the point of

## THE STRUGGLE WITH ENGLAND

**madness.** In reading the marching diaries and letters of the combatants, and memoirs published subsequently by those who had managed to escape, one cannot help being struck by the tone

**Demoralisation of the French Armies.**

that pervades them all—a tone of unmitigated horror. The men, exposed to the most depressing extremes of weather, were fighting against “devils”—the word is constantly occurring. Their first nightmare was to be confronted by a hydra whose

heads grew again as soon as they were cut off; their second was even worse—guerilla warfare, ambushes at every corner, treacherous assaults by mere handfuls of the enemy, which, if they resulted in capture, meant unmentionable tortures, outrages so terrible that when he remembered the sights he had seen—comrades mutilated, disembowelled, crucified on the doors of barns, sawn up between two planks—the soldier turned pale and trembled for many a long year afterwards. And though he shook with fear he also foamed at the mouth with rage and indignation. They still remained fine soldiers, and when called upon to fight, fought well. But when victory always remained barren they began to murmur again and give vent to protestations of fury. They laid the blame on their leaders, and not without reason; for the state of demoralisation was mainly due to the irresponsible and occasionally criminal behaviour of the High Command.

Napoleon had left a whole constellation of illustrious generals in Spain—Soult, Ney, Suchet, Mortier, Moncey, Augereau, Victor, Gouvion Saint-Cyr, and Junot—and under them those peerless division commanders and brigadiers of the Grand Army who had already been tried in a score of campaigns. Most of them were still valiant and brilliant leaders; some, like Suchet, Mortier, Gouvion Saint-Cyr and Moncey, remained admirable examples of military virtue; but many, on the other hand, had sadly deteriorated.

“The Marshals and Generals who were left to their own resources in Spain might have done better,” observed Napoleon to Caulaincourt in 1812, “but they refuse to work together. They hate each other so much that they would rather die than do anything that might redound to the glory of another.”—“They have been guilty of schoolboy blunders,” he added. True, this jealousy between the leaders had always and everywhere constituted the weak

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

side, and the least noble characteristic of these otherwise valiant soldiers. But when the Master was with them he insisted on their keeping the peace and at least restored harmony, if not concord. The Emperor, however, had not been in Spain for two years now, and, in his absence, they had naturally let themselves go and tried to gratify in Spain the aspirations he had suppressed elsewhere. It is easy to imagine how they treated Joseph's "orders." He was supposed

**Joseph  
Flouted.**

to be governing Spain, but the country really had a score of Kings. Puffed up with military pride, the members of the High Command had no intention of obeying this pitiful Sovereign and did not hesitate to convey as much to him, brutally enough on occasion. They, too, were embittered; the war had proved a disappointment; it had worn them out and driven them to exasperation; and if they turned to dissipation, it was in order to forget their troubles. All this meant that, in addition to a demoralised army, those in command were, with but few exceptions, also demoralised. "Spain," wrote one veteran, "is a grave which swallows up everything; we are fooling away our time there."

The leaders agreed, and, overwhelmed by complaints from the rank and file, laid the blame on the Emperor. It was the Emperor who had dug this "grave" where they would all be swallowed up, and they expected the man so woefully responsible for "this fine enterprise" to come and put an end to it—"if anything could put an end to it."—"Hercules alone is capable of crushing the heads of the hydra," wrote Kellermann.

Unfortunately, where it was a question of Spain, Napoleon seemed to have lost his senses; for he, too—from a distance—was strangely demoralised in this connection.

As a matter of fact, it had not taken him long to discover the ridiculous twofold mistake of which he had been guilty in turning the Bourbons out of Spain and replacing them by his brother Joseph. But he had always consoled himself with the thought that, as soon as his hands were free, he would "settle it all in a flash."—"I can see," he repeated to Mathieu Dumas

at the beginning of 1810, "that I shall have to go myself and set up the machine again." But the whole business—precisely

## THE STRUGGLE WITH ENGLAND

because, having arisen out of a mistake, it had led to a hundred other mistakes—was a nightmare to him. Never during the whole course of his reign did he reveal such agitation of mind in connection with anything he had undertaken. Because, possibly for the first time, he was a prey to doubt, Spain filled him with unspeakable nausea; so much so, indeed, that he acted as he had never before done in his life, and the man who used to insist on seeing and understanding everything before taking action, now even refused to read the despatches from Spain, but commissioned Berthier to receive them and merely give him extracts and résumés. And still he did not go; it was as though he were terrified of the abyss in which, through him, without him, and for lack of him, his Grand Army of Austerlitz, Jena and Friedland was perishing.

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After the indecisive battle of Talavera on the 28th of July, 1809, the Anglo-Spaniards had claimed a victory, but feeling that they had really been defeated, and, in any case, considerably weakened, they had fallen back from the Tagus to the Guadiana, thereby leaving the advantage in the hands of the French. Joseph, regaining confidence, had immediately turned his thoughts to an expedition to Andalusia; it would be a simple matter, he declared, and its success would enable him at last to proclaim himself master of the whole of Spain.

### Operations in Spain.

Even in the summer of 1809, this would have been a hazardous enterprise, seeing that Catalonia and Aragon still remained unsubdued in his rear. In Catalonia, Gouvion Saint-Cyr had moved so slowly that it had been found necessary to replace him by Augereau. True, Suchet was displaying greater energy in reducing Aragon to submission; after having partially crushed Blake's Spanish army at Belchita, he had cleared the province for the time being of *guerrilleros*. But Old Castille and the Asturias were now causing anxiety, the guerilla war in those provinces having spread considerably. Ney had resigned his command in Old Castille; exasperated by the fact that Soult "his enemy" had been put over his head, he had gone to Paris to protest, and Marchand, his successor,

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

had fought an unsuccessful engagement at Tamámes which had compromised the whole situation.

This failure had produced at least one favourable result—it inflated the pride of the insurrectionary Junta to such an inordinate degree that, in spite of Wellington's advice, they decided to hurl an army on Madrid. Soult, who some weeks before had been promoted Major-General of the French forces in Spain, under the purely nominal command of Joseph, had met the onslaught of this army at Ocaña on the 18th of November and had stemmed it. So indescribable had been the rout of the Spaniards that the Junta, terrified out of their wits, had fled headlong from Seville and sought refuge in the island of Leon, and feeling it had ceased to exercise any authority, had convoked the Cortes.

But it was now Joseph's turn to be unduly puffed up by success. He dreaded more than he desired the arrival of the Emperor and was anxious to be able to confront him with a victory followed by conquests. He accordingly returned to the idea of an expedition to Andalusia, in which he was encouraged by Soult, who was also impatient to obtain brilliant results before the Master's arrival.

Napoleon did not think there was any call for operations in Andalusia and he was perfectly right. The insurrection was dragging on, he declared, solely owing to the presence of the English in the Peninsula; the moment they were expelled it would fizzle out; since, therefore, the victory of Ocaña had secured Madrid from all further menace, it was against Wellington's army, which had sought refuge in Portugal, that all efforts should be concentrated. And it was against the English that he would march as soon as he had crossed the Pyrenees. It was perhaps precisely because he was reserving this major operation, which was constantly being postponed, for himself, that after having expressed his disapproval of the Andalusian expedition, he gave way to the solicitations of Joseph and Soult and in the end gave his consent to it.

But, detained in Paris by the marriage negotiations, he had suddenly made up his mind to entrust the task to Masséna. The Prince of Essling, with the 60,000 men belonging to Ney's

## THE STRUGGLE WITH ENGLAND

and Junot's corps, reinforced by another 25,000 men, was to march down the right bank of the Tagus to Lisbon, while Soult, after mastering Andalusia, was to detach 30,000 men from his 70,000, and send them to attack the city from the left bank. Under this double onslaught Wellington could not fail to succumb.

The Andalusian expedition set out on the 18th of January; on that day Victor made short work of the Spanish troops who were making a show of defending the Sierra. The surprise victory should have been turned to account in order to march direct on Cadiz, where no resistance had as yet been organised. But the French delayed outside every town in Andalusia, and by the time they reached Cadiz, the Junta had made the city, which in any case was extremely difficult of approach, almost impregnable. Joseph had insisted on reducing the whole province, town by town, whereupon he once more began to play the mighty monarch, the independent King, "His Spanish Majesty."

**Joseph's  
Ridiculous  
Vanity.**

Was it this ridiculous vanity that irritated the Emperor? Be that as it may, it was just when the incense was getting to Joseph's head that he received from his brother's hand the heaviest blow ever levelled at his pride, not to mention his prestige.

Napoleon, in fact, had thought of a solution of the Spanish problem upon which he eventually decided—the colossal expenditure in men and money beyond the Pyrenees was to be made good by no less drastic a measure than the annexation of the northern provinces to the Empire. By the decree of the 8th of

**Annexation  
of the  
Northern  
Provinces.**

February, 1810, four great military governments, independent of the King, were established north of the Ebro—Catalonia, Aragon, Navarre and Biscay—and there could be no doubt that this was merely a preliminary step towards their union with France. Furthermore, the armies operating in the other provinces, with the exception of Castille, were officially freed from the command of the hapless Joseph.

**Joseph  
Rebels.**

The latter, driven to exasperation, retaliated, on the 16th of March, by the Seville Decrees, which so fundamentally contradicted the decrees of the 8th of February, that, as the French Minister in Madrid declared, the Emperor's authority in Spain was now confronted



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

by two insurrections—King Joseph's and the Junta's. The King, who was completely demented, was said to have made the astonishing assertion that he would be able to hold his own and that "the roads to France were not unknown to the national armies"—meaning the Spanish armies. He spoke as though he were the successor of Charles V or Philip II.

Meanwhile, in some perturbation, he had sent two Spanish grandees to Paris entrusted with the task of getting the decrees of the 8th of February rescinded. But the Emperor gave them an extremely cold reception. He was at that very moment endeavouring to end the Spanish business by means of the Portuguese expedition, and he postponed dealing with Joseph.

It was sufficient for his purpose for the blow to be delivered any time before the month of August. Falling like a bolt from the blue, it was to drive the English into the sea. This would mean the submission of the whole of Spain, and possibly, as a result, Great Britain would be forced to capitulate.

Thus he had abandoned all idea of using threats to force England to open negotiations or of humouring her in any way. From that moment, though Joseph's fate remained in abeyance, the doom of King Louis of Holland was irrevocably sealed.

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As early as the month of December, 1809, the Emperor had issued a preliminary decree annexing the southern provinces of

**Annexation  
of Holland.**

Holland to France and ordering the occupation of her strongholds. Moreover, such was the situation, that the country itself had come to prefer complete annexation to the Empire. Louis, too, was hastening his own doom; having returned extremely embittered from Paris, and exasperated by the visit paid shortly afterwards, in May, 1810, by Napoleon to the annexed Dutch cantons, he abandoned all hope of retaining his Crown, and really seemed to be doing all he could to bring the storm about his ears. He refused point-blank to allow the seizure of the pseudo-American cargoes which were known to be English, encouraged the resistance of some of the Dutch to the occupation of their strongholds by those whom this strange Frenchman dubbed "those French," and made no attempt to carry out the promise he had made his brother to recondition

## THE STRUGGLE WITH ENGLAND

the Netherlands fleet. The Emperor was merely awaiting an excuse to have done with him, and when a servant belonging to the French Legation was insulted and ill-treated in the open street in Amsterdam, he seized the opportunity, and ordered Marshal Oudinot to enter the city; whereupon Louis was summoned, for the last time, to carry out the promises he had made in December, 1809. The King called his Council and when the latter advised

### **Abdication of Louis.**

submission, he abdicated during the night of the 2nd-3rd of July, 1810, in favour of his little son, and secretly fled the capital. On the 3rd Oudinot entered Amsterdam, and, on the 9th, the Emperor issued a decree annexing the Kingdom of Holland to France. The country was to be divided into nine departments, to which Prefects were to be sent. Meanwhile, Holland was to constitute a "general Government" entrusted to the care of Arch-Treasurer Lebrun, Duke of Piacenza. All signs of unrest having subsided by the 23rd of July, this august personage was able to write to the Emperor, on that date: "Sire, the land and waters of Holland belong to you."

Perhaps Napoleon had not finally made up his mind to keep "the land and waters" for good, for, on the 4th of August, he was still writing to one of his Ministers that Dutch affairs would remain in the hands of the various Government departments in Paris "until he was more certain of what he wished to do." Possibly he was keeping Holland up his sleeve as a means of bargaining with England, who, he felt convinced, would before very long be forced to sue for peace; for at this very moment he was preparing the knock-out blow for Wellington.

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There was no time to lose. The state of stagnation or chaos in Spanish affairs was patent to all Europe, where, as a result, hope revived and feelings of hostility were strengthened. It was "the miasmata" from Spain, Napoleon afterwards declared, that were chiefly responsible for poisoning the atmosphere in St. Petersburg.

As a matter of fact, on the Russian horizon the sky became every day more overcast. Alexander, in pursuit of a still distant object, was sedulously nursing Viennese society through his agents. His friend Czartoryzki was also discreetly sounding the nobility

### **The Tsar Pre- pares for War.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw on his behalf with the object I have already described. But all these intrigues did not prevent this "Greek" from assuring Caulaincourt again and again that he wanted peace, and valued the alliance. And the Ambassador, completely taken in, stood surety in Paris for the Tsar's loyalty. Even Napoleon, at once deceiver and deceived, wrote to the King of Saxony: "Our relations with Russia continue to be extremely friendly."

Now, at this very moment, the Tsar was feverishly preparing for war. On a vast front east of the Niemen he was organising a strong line of defence, and, what was even more significant, was already sending thither all the forces he had at his disposal, having recalled them from Finland as well as from the banks of the Danube. Caulaincourt, shut up in St. Petersburg, saw nothing of the important works, the existence of which others were, somewhat late in the day, to reveal to Napoleon. By the end of 1810 the vast defensive line would be ready and 300,000 Russians

**Napoleon's** mobilised, while Napoleon, having recalled most  
**Pacific** of his Army of Germany, had only 50,000 men  
**Intentions.** between the Rhine and the Vistula. This fact seems completely to have escaped Thiers, who was thus able, in all sincerity, to create the myth of Alexander's pacificism and Napoleon's aggression, which was only finally exploded sixty years later by Albert Vandal, who came forward with full documentary evidence.

Truth to tell, the defensive measures undertaken by Russia and the calling up of Muscovite forces certainly seem to have been dictated by a sudden panic which, in the summer of 1810, laid hold of the Tsar and his people, both of whom believed, quite without foundation, that they were on the eve of being attacked by Napoleon. This gave rise to utterly unjustifiable terror, and the panic was increased by the news of an event which did indeed appear to be a menace to Russia, though it was destined one day to turn to her advantage—the placing of a French Marshal at the head of the Swedish nation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sweden, as the result of a Palace revolution, had just changed her ruler. Gustavus IV, the lifelong foe of France, had been

## THE STRUGGLE WITH ENGLAND

overthrown, and his place taken by his old uncle who, on becoming King with the title of Charles XIII, had made friendly advances to Napoleon. As the aged monarch had no children, the Emperor hoped he would choose an heir even more amicably inclined to France than he was himself. Charles XIII would have liked to appoint the Duke of Augustenburg, brother of Christian IV, King of Denmark. But the latter was opposed to the idea, hoping that he himself might be made heir to the neighbouring kingdom. Whereupon the King of Sweden had asked the Emperor's advice: "Let Napoleon give us one of his Kings," he wrote, "and we shall be saved."

**Revolution in Sweden.** Napoleon had no wish to give "one of his Kings" to Sweden. He had learnt from bitter experience. He merely encouraged Charles to adopt Christian IV's young brother, on the tacit understanding that he would persuade the King of Denmark, his faithful ally, to consent. And as the King of Sweden was anxious, before adopting an heir, to hear what the Diet of his country had to say, Alquier, the French Minister, was instructed to bring influence to bear on the deputies to support the candidature of the Duke of Augustenburg.

**The Election of a Crown Prince.** But meanwhile certain Swedes, more French than France herself, and believing, moreover, that they were acting in accordance with Napoleon's secret wishes, expressed themselves in favour of a French candidate, and turned their eyes to Bernadotte, Prince of Pontecorvo. The Marshal, who, in 1807, had been in command of the French forces in Pomerania, had, after defeating the Swedes, behaved with such gallantry and courtesy to their leaders that he had completely won their hearts. This native of Bearne, who loved to please, had succeeded in pleasing, with the result that Werner, a mere lieutenant in the Swedish army, had left the scene of hostilities to conduct an energetic intrigue among the deputies on behalf of so amiable a soldier. The latter sent one of their number, Count Wrede, to Paris and he went straight to Bernadotte and told him everything. The Marshal, mad with joy, rushed to the Emperor and informed him, as though it were a piece of good news, that a strong party in Sweden had of their own free will expressed the desire to elect him, and with

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

torrential protestations—"Diou vivant,"—of love and fidelity, begged leave to be allowed to present himself for election by the Diet.

Napoleon, surprised, and in his heart of hearts far from pleased, showed considerable hesitation. Perhaps he already felt that this dangerous Bernadotte was quite capable of betraying him personally, but, since he held the patriotism of the men of the Revolution in high esteem, he did not believe him capable of betraying France. Moreover, as we know, he was at this time entirely obsessed by one thought—he hoped a series of premeditated or unpremeditated blows would force England to capitulate. Might not the mere fact that a French Marshal had become master of Sweden, where British goods had been more or less clandestinely entering hitherto, contribute to this result?

True, there was still Russia to be considered. There could be little doubt that the Tsar would take umbrage at such a choice; had the matter arisen in 1808 or 1809, Napoleon would certainly have sacrificed the enthronement of this Frenchman—this somewhat dubious Frenchman—to his friendship for Alexander. But he was no longer inclined to respect the Tsar's susceptibilities, and he decided to allow things to take their course, "because," as Albert Vandal very justly remarks, "he was beginning to face the future with culpable fatalism," and if he did not actually encourage Bernadotte, he at least consented to his candidature.

The Diet met at Örebro on the 25th of July, 1810, and after long deliberations elected Bernadotte Crown Prince of Sweden on the 21st of August.

"It was impossible for me to withhold my consent," Napoleon explained to Metternich, "because a French Marshal on the throne of Gustavus Adolphus is one of the finest tricks that can possibly be played on England."

Russia, as indeed was only to be expected, seemed to be more upset by the event than imperturbable England. The Tsar's circle complained that Russia was being "surrounded." "We are shut in between Stockholm and Warsaw!" they declared. Alexander did not hide his displeasure, and the final conclusion drawn by Vandal is that this

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election "alienated France more than ever from Russia without securing the adhesion of Sweden."

Far from binding Sweden to France, the event, paradoxically enough, was destined to do precisely the reverse. The fact of the matter was that neither Napoleon nor anyone else guessed with what profoundly bitter feelings of rancour and long-standing detesta-

**Bernadotte's  
Hostility to  
Napoleon.** tion of Napoleon Bernadotte took his departure for Sweden. In short, he hated him from the bottom of his heart. "Thank God, I shall no longer be in his clutches!" he exclaimed, and the words, revealing, as they did, ten years of the bitterest resentment, aggravated by constraint, should have explained in advance and provided full warning of the four years of treachery that were to follow.

Thus Napoleon, far from having improved the situation, had merely added another danger to those with which he was already menaced. He seems occasionally to have had a presentiment of this. "I should have been delighted if he had refused! He has no love for me!" he exclaimed. But he added: "Ah well, what must be must be!" And he would once more console himself with the thought of the "fine trick played on England," which, for the time being, was all that mattered.

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As I have already mentioned, he was entirely obsessed by England, and was making it his aim to drive her to desperation by a series of lightning blows; but an essential preliminary for

**The Blockade.** breaking down "Albion's" resistance was for her to be worn out by the Blockade. True, the annexation of Holland had filled one of the breaches in it, and if Sweden closed Göteborg, which was a regular dumping ground for English goods, the wall would be complete. But, strange to say, at the very moment when he was strengthening this wall, the Emperor of the French himself, under pressure of the economic requirements of his own country, opened a thousand-and-one gaps in it.

He had already opened a few three years previously, by the system of "licences," though the concessions made had been infinitesimal. The country was suffering great inconveniences, and it was Crétet, the Minister of the Interior, who had prevailed upon him, in 1808, to grant

**The System  
of "Licences."**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

this relief. Ever since 1805 good harvests had led to the accumulation of vast quantities of corn and wine in France. In the old days she had had a customer in England, who had relieved the congestion in the French markets, but the closing of this outlet had resulted in their being completely glutted. Moreover, certain industries were menaced with ruin if their products, for which there had once been a demand in England, were allowed to accumulate. Lastly, there was a sad shortage of colonial produce, and during the interval before they had been replaced by the "substitutes" which were everywhere being sought, it had been deemed advisable to allow a small quota of these goods to enter France from time to time. Certain ships were, therefore, granted a licence to convey to England a few French agricultural products and manufactured articles, provided they returned laden with the all-important colonial produce. These licences had at first been few and far between, but since 1809 they had increased in number, and constituted exceptions in the Blockade regulations which, though harmless enough in themselves, gave the allies of France, who were hard hit by it, an excuse for violating it. All this, however, was trifling compared with the course which, in the summer of 1810, the Emperor decided to adopt.

It was the annexation of Holland that suggested the idea to him. Owing to King Louis' past slackness, the country, at the time of its annexation, was full to overflowing with English merchandise. To prevent the Dutch from being ruined, the Emperor consented to allow English stocks thus accumulated in Holland to enter France on payment to the Treasury of an extremely heavy duty—50 per cent, in fact. Thus merchandise and provisions coming from Holland would be sold in France to the profit, the extremely substantial profit, of the Treasury, which, at this juncture, the Emperor felt should be replenished by any and every means.

### **Concession to Holland.**

The profit, indeed, was found to be enormous, and it was this experience which led the Emperor to turn this purely fortuitous and restricted measure into something more all-embracing. Since British merchants did not hesitate to pay 40, 50 and even 60 per cent to smugglers, why should they hesitate to pay a similar tribute to the customs officials of the French Empire at infinitely smaller risk? The imperial Government, moreover, would be left

## THE STRUGGLE WITH ENGLAND

a free hand to determine, in accordance with the needs of the country, the kind and quantity of merchandise to be admitted, and as the money thus raised by the Treasury was ear-marked, in Napoleon's mind, for the enlargement and strengthening of his navy, England would find she had herself paid for the arms which would one day perhaps defeat her at sea—another "fine trick!"

It was this spirit that inspired the Trianon Decree of the 5th of August, 1810, which some historians of the Blockade regard as the gravest blow delivered by Napoleon himself against the system which, for the last four years, he had been straining every nerve to have strictly observed by the rest of Europe. True, while thus reserving to himself the right of opening the gates of France from time to time, the Emperor felt it incumbent upon him to keep a stricter watch than ever on smugglers to prevent the entry of contraband goods. And the Trianon Decree was followed, in October, by draconian rules and regulations ordering the tracking down, confiscation and merciless destruction of all English merchandise and produce smuggled into the country. Lastly, the Emperor showed more determination than ever in insisting that all subject countries, as well as friendly and allied nations—Prussia, Austria, Sweden and Russia—should support the Blockade which he himself was so flagrantly violating for his own benefit. It did not take long for the Tsar, bubbling over with indignation, to draw attention to this proceeding in no measured language.

### **The Tsar's Indignation.**

But, at this period, the Emperor had already reached the point, to quote a contemporary, "of frequently undoing his own handiwork"; moreover, he was hoping that the knock-out blow he was at last about to deliver in Spain would settle everything before England had succumbed to the effects of this modified blockade.

For SOURCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY see the end of Chapter XXXVIII.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### NAPOLEON TORN BETWEEN SPAIN AND RUSSIA

The fate of Europe hangs on Portugal. Why Napoleon does not go to Spain. He entrusts Masséna with the task of polishing off Wellington. The latter organises his plan of battle; the lines of Torres Vedras. Masséna repulses Wellington, but cannot break his lines. He appeals to the Emperor. England's anxiety. Napoleon's "great refusal"; he is sick of Spain and anxious about Russia. The Tsar humours England; the latter, at bay, attempts a commercial expedition to the Baltic; Napoleon aims at compassing its failure; Alexander refuses his co-operation; he opens his ports to British merchandise and suddenly closes his frontiers to French products. The Duchy of Oldenburg, a Russian protectorate, is annexed to the French Empire, together with the Hanseatic Towns. Bernadotte holds out a hand to Russia. Napoleon, a prey to anxiety, refuses to leave France. Foy conveys his reply to Masséna. Soult fails him. Masséna, discouraged, gives up the attack and beats a retreat. Failure of the Portuguese expedition.

**T**HE whole of Europe was well aware that Napoleon had made up his mind to strike his enemy a mortal blow in the Iberian Peninsula, and during those months of July and August, 1810, all eyes were fixed on this corner of the continent, on the little state of Portugal where Wellington was awaiting the blow which was, perhaps, big with destiny.

#### Importance of Portugal.

With such vast stakes at issue it may well give rise to astonishment that Napoleon should have left to one of his lieutenants, even the most heroic and most valiant, the task of carrying out the operation. For he alone had the power, as recent experiences had proved, to restore between the great military leaders who were in command of the French forces beyond the Pyrenees, the harmony necessary for the success of this decisive operation. He alone, in the event of difficulties arising, seemed capable of overcoming them and once and for all driving the English into the sea. There were moments when he was aware of this. Three times, between April and December, 1810, he had apparently made up his mind, and was on the point of taking his departure.

## BETWEEN SPAIN AND RUSSIA

"His horses, his wagons, and his quarters in Bayonne were all ready waiting for him," writes Frédéric Masson. "Three times

**Napoleon  
Delays.**

did he announce his departure, and three times did he postpone it." The troops from Germany, who had returned to France, were almost standing to attention expecting any moment to go and help their 300,000 comrades in Spain to drive out the redcoats. "Hercules alone, with his club," wrote Kellermann from Spain, "could crush all the heads of the hydra," and, like Kellermann, the generals and rank and file in Spain were all awaiting "Hercules." But still the Emperor did not go! The fact of the matter was that, even if "Hercules" was not spinning at the feet of Omphale, he was dallying with her. Incredible as it may seem, the Emperor, deceiving even himself with the most specious arguments, was sacrificing his plans to "domestic bliss." Those about him,

**He is  
Detained by  
Marie Louise.**

thunderstruck, knew that it was Marie Louise who was detaining him, and he was sometimes annoyed by the astonished and disapproving gaze of those who were watching him procrastinating for the first time in his life. Later on he explained his conduct: "I had just married a young, pretty and agreeable wife; was I not to show a sign of pleasure? Was I not to devote a single moment to her without being hauled over the coals? Was I not to be allowed a few short hours of happiness like other men?" No, he was not!—because he was Napoleon and because, more at this moment than ever before, his destiny had need of him.

Thus, since the Emperor declared that for the time being he was detained, it fell to Masséna to deliver the great

**Masséna  
Sent to  
Spain.**

blow. "Masséna," Napoleon once declared, "has military gifts before which one can only prostrate oneself." But, at this time, Masséna was in the same boat as the other great Generals, while, in his case, the weight of years, which sometimes only suddenly begins to tell, was also making itself felt. In fact, after Wagram, where he had once more covered himself with glory, Masséna himself felt he was worn out. Moreover, knowing only too well the exalted comrades, who were to be placed under his command, he was extremely doubtful whether they would resign themselves to obeying anyone except the Emperor. He refused the offer.

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Napoleon then appealed to the love of glory; and the victor of Zurich gave way, though he was still filled with presentiments and fears—a bad frame of mind for a leader on the eve of an enterprise upon which everything depended.

Napoleon had promised him 80,000 men, the combined forces of Ney and Junot, who were to become his lieutenants. But, for different reasons, both these men were extremely mortified at being made his subordinates, and received him at Salamanca with icy deference. On leaving his presence they declared that he had “aged”—one of those expressions which, when passed from mouth to mouth, kills a leader before he has time to move. Before long everybody was repeating: “Masséna has aged.” And unfortunately it was true. “The last flickers of a dying flame!” was the expression applied to his occasional flashes of genius, by one of his greatest admirers in the ranks, a man who afterwards exalted him to the skies.

The Prince of Essling, conscious of this aloofness on the part of his lieutenants, felt the chill of old age all the more. Moreover, in this demoralised Army of Spain the old general no longer recognised his men of the great campaigns. Lastly, the forces which he found awaiting him, though all very fine on paper, were quite inferior, even from the point of view of numbers, to those Napoleon had promised him. Of the 80,000 men he had been led to expect, he had no more than 53,000 at his disposal. Moreover, the Emperor had calculated, and always maintained, that Wellington had only 30,000 men, whereas these 30,000 were far more than doubled by 50,000 Portuguese, who were much better fighters than the Spaniards. Nevertheless, after a few days, the Marshal seemed reassured; 53,000 Frenchmen against 80,000 Anglo-Portuguese—that was good enough for him! he had been in tighter corners before! And they would have been good enough—as was proved up to the hilt—in open country; but it was not in open country that Wellington intended to face him; and here the curtain rises on the tragedy.

Behind the thick veil which, for the last year, had been drawn between Portugal and the French forces in Spain, Wellington had organised “his battle.” Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of

## BETWEEN SPAIN AND RUSSIA

Wellington, was already proving himself the Iron Duke he was afterwards called. He was not a genius, but, in his case, strength of will took the place of genius. While, in 1809 and 1810, he had been advancing his troops on Spanish territory, he had laid out the lines of Torres Vedras, covering Lisbon and its port, which Junot had one day surrendered to him almost without firing a shot. A true forerunner of the German Generals of the Great War, he had created, on a miniature scale, a "position" similar to those with which the Germans were to confront the Allies in 1918, and which the latter found it so difficult to capture. In 1810 the Torres Vedras lines had developed into earthworks fifteen miles wide and 30 miles long, affording complete security to the Anglo-Portuguese forces. To reduce them, heavy siege artillery was required, and this Masséna did not possess.

**The Torres  
Vedras Lines.**

If he had made an immediate advance against Wellington in the spring, he might perhaps have averted the danger by falling upon the position before it was finished. But, as we know, Soult, who was to collaborate in the operation, was being held up by the utterly futile Andalusian expedition, and it was necessary to wait. Thus Wellington was given three more months in which to organise his defence, and it was only between the 10th and 15th of September that Masséna, driving the English troops before him, crossed the Portuguese frontier. Moreover, his march through a region which had been entirely devastated was slow and arduous, and the men, whose spirits had, for a brief moment, revived, were once more becoming demoralised, while their leader was also losing heart. When, on the 10th, the advance guards thought they had driven the enemy into the sea, they saw the last of the red coats, at the end of the retreat, burrowing into the trenches of Torres Vedras, and on trying to ferret them out, they were received by fierce fire directed against them by an invisible foe.

**Masséna  
Delays His  
Attack.**

This came as a surprise to the whole of the French army. Masséna had the position reconnoitred; it appeared formidable indeed. He called a halt and merely organised a blockade of the "lines." But he despatched General Foy to Paris to lay the situation before the

**Foy Sent  
to Paris.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Emperor and beg for strong reinforcements. He may even have hoped that, alarmed by the state of affairs, the great warrior would decide to bring them himself.

It was a tragic moment. England was frightened out of her life. After all, Wellington had been put to flight by Masséna and had sought refuge in this remote corner of Portugal. Would he be able to hold out as he again and again protested he could? If he allowed his "lines" to be taken, it meant a crisis and the fall of the Government; the Whigs, determined to sue for peace, would come into office. When, at the end of November, General Foy arrived in Paris, Europe was expecting to see the Emperor take the Portuguese business energetically in hand himself and hasten to settle it with one of his lightning strokes. England would then be forced to capitulate and Napoleon would remain without a single adversary.

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Dante, referring to the failure of the German Emperors to support the Ghibellines in Italy, when the latter were on the point of crushing the Guelphs calls their action the "great refusal"—*il gran rifiuto*. And Masséna's appeal placed Napoleon face to face with his destiny—it was a case of another "great refusal."

The Emperor listened attentively to General Foy's report, which surprised him; but instead of granting the Marshal's request, he gave way to violent reproaches—Masséna had been guilty of mismanagement, he had shown a lack of energy and of genius in failing to prevent Wellington from returning to his fortified lines. The old veteran had been quite right not to hurl himself heedlessly against them, and with a little manœuvring they would certainly be taken; but the troops that were already in Spain would be ample for the operation. In the first place General Drouet was to detach one of his divisions—10,000 men—to reinforce Masséna, and secondly Soult was also to be given formal instructions to support him and was to send 10,000 men to the Tagus. With the help of Soult an attack could be made from both sides of the river and the famous lines captured. Moreover, Napoleon continued stubbornly to maintain that Wellington

**Napoleon  
Criticises  
Masséna.**

## BETWEEN SPAIN AND RUSSIA

had quite a small force at his disposal and would not be able to hold out against 100,000 Frenchmen.

Was he genuinely mistaken? If so, it meant that he had already lost all grasp of reality. This much at least is certain, that, more than ever nauseated by Spain and everything connected with it, he had, at this juncture, other reasons for regarding it as extremely imprudent to risk any more of his troops in that odious country or to risk going there himself. For some weeks past, he had seen, to his intense anxiety, that war with Russia had become, if not probable, at least possible.

This was the last thing in the world he wished for. But for six months past the Tsar had been preparing for it, and the Emperor could not fail to be aware of it. True, Alexander strained every nerve to lull him into a sense of security; while, with the utmost secrecy, he was urging on the completion of the military works and constantly sending for fresh troops, he despatched the young and elegant Colonel Tchernitcheff to Paris for the purpose of bribing officials to reveal the secrets of the French Ministry of War. The Colonel brought with him a letter of recommendation from Caulaincourt, who described him as "a worthy and excellent young man"; this secured him a favourable reception by the official world and by the Emperor himself, and enabled him to extend his activities as a super-spy to every sphere, including even private families. Up to the end of 1811, Napoleon was still unaware of the machinations of this "excellent young man," but it was impossible for him not to see that Alexander was taking liberties with the alliance, which proved that he no longer dreaded its rupture. Moreover, Napoleon had no intention of turning a blind eye to the Tsar's blatant violation of treaties in connection with England.

Since the annexation of Holland and the temporary return of Sweden to the French alliance, England had been deprived of all means of access into Europe through northern waters. The Tsar, as we know, was inclined to throw open his ports, at least partially, since he was, perhaps, of all the European Sovereigns, the least resigned to seeing Great Britain ruined and forced to capitulate. "Is the war you are waging with England really serious?" Napoleon had enquired of the Russian Ambassador in August, 1810.

**The Tsar  
Prepares  
for War.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

The situation was becoming extremely grave. England was literally driven to bay; stocks were piling up and stifling her and she made up her mind to make a special effort to get rid of at least the bulk of them. A huge convoy, flying a neutral flag, made for the Straits; but it was sailing under false colours, and the fact that it was escorted by British men-o'-war as far as the entrance of the Baltic left no doubt as to its origin. The Emperor was informed, and warned Denmark, Sweden and Prussia. In spite of this, hundreds of these sham neutrals succeeded in entering the Straits, but found all ports closed to them. And they began to get flurried, "like the remnants of an army in flight," wrote Champagny, on the 16th of October. They had no alternative but to try their fortunes in the direction of the Russian Empire.

As early as the 13th of October, 1810, Napoleon had warned Alexander, and told him that the neutral flag was being abused; if Russia prevented all attempts at unloading, "there would be a general outcry for peace in England, and her Government would be obliged to sue for it." The letter was in the post when the sham neutral vessels, numbering some 600, boldly set sail for Riga. Napoleon was filled with anxiety and again wrote to Alexander, pointing out how "terrible" the consequences would be. "It depends on Your Majesty whether we have peace or a prolongation of the war."

This was precisely the argument least calculated to convert the Tsar to Napoleon's way of thinking. He was already inclined to regard England as a useful ally for the future and had never been less anxious to see her ruined. He had no intention, he declared to Caulaincourt, of violating the Blockade, but, after all, there must surely be a certain number of genuine neutrals!

**Russia's** He would have the colours carefully examined, but  
**Bad Faith.** "he would not issue a general order closing his ports to all vessels appearing in the open." The bad faith of Russia was now obvious.

The Emperor was annoyed, and characteristically made up his mind to give tit for tat. He had for some time been contemplating striking another blow at England by annexing the whole of the North Sea coast to his Empire, in addition to Holland; for the

## BETWEEN SPAIN AND RUSSIA

last six months, the only consideration that had prevented him had been the prospect of confiscating Oldenburg. The Duke of Oldenburg, who was closely related to the Tsar, was, as a matter of fact, formally protected by a clause of the Treaty of Tilsit. But, as the Tsar was violating the main object of its existence—the war with England—why should the Emperor respect the insignificant clause relating to the unimportant little State of Oldenburg? It was on the 11th of November that Napoleon received the courier sent by Caulaincourt to communicate the Tsar's veiled refusal, and on the 12th he resolved to annex the

### **Annexation of Oldenburg.**

Hanseatic towns, together with Oldenburg, which was under the protection of the Tsar. He had no wish for war to arise out of the incident, but he saw that it was possible; and at last General Foy, who for weeks past had been awaiting a definite reply to Masséna's requests, was allowed to see how preoccupied he was with events in the north. But he still did not think the Tsar capable of such "folly"; however, on the 31st of December, 1810, the latter suddenly took the step best calculated to exasperate and, worse still, to alarm the Emperor.

By a ukase of that date, all ships flying neutral colours were authorised to unload, and French manufactured articles were denied the right of entry into the Russian Empire. The reason given was the fall of the rouble; the boyars, it was maintained, had

### **The Ukase of December 31st.**

developed a taste for luxury and were wasting their substance on Paris novelties; the Tsar declared that he meant to put a stop to this draining of money from the country. Even if the reason had been a thousand times more cogent, the decision, reached without the slightest warning to the French Government, assumed a definitely hostile complexion. Napoleon interpreted it as such and made no bones about letting his strange ally know it.

From that moment all their secret differences became more sharply defined. Poland still remained the most formidable apple of discord. Napoleon repeated his assurances that, if the *status quo* were maintained, he would never restore the ancient Kingdom, but he also implied that, if the alliance with Russia were broken, he would not be able to refuse the wishes of the Polish people. The Tsar, for his part, continued to carry on his campaign



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

for winning over the nobility of the Grand Duchy, and Czartoryski did not relax his efforts to feel his way with them. It was not Poland, however, that was destined to embitter the conflict, but Oldenburg; for the Tsar, while himself evading the clauses of the Treaty, hoped to catch Napoleon out in a flagrant breach of it, and seized upon the spoliation of the Duke, his kinsman, as an excellent excuse for bringing forward an accusation of bad faith.

**The Tsar's  
Activities in  
Poland.**

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The Emperor had, indeed, decided to annex the whole of the North Sea coast. As a matter of fact, the first to fall a victim to this decision was his own brother, Jerome, who had been informed of it as early as the 18th of August, 1810. It meant for him the loss of a third of his kingdom and all the river mouths. His recriminations had fallen on deaf ears; Napoleon had ceased to pay any attention to demands from his own family. And this made him feel entitled to ride rough-shod over the protestations of a mere cousin of the Tsar. Nevertheless, he had hesitated for three months; in the end he had made up his mind to have done with the matter, and by a decree of the 13th of December, 1810, Oldenburg, together with the Hanseatic Towns, was annexed to France, whose frontier was thus unduly extended to the Elbe.

**Jerome  
Despoiled.**

True, it was authoritatively stated in the decree that the Duke of Oldenburg was to be compensated for his loss by the "Duchy of Erfurt." The Duke refused, and appealed to St. Petersburg, declaring that Clause 12 of the Treaty of Tilsit had been violated. The alliance was now definitely on its last legs.

This was extremely serious, for, although he could not as yet be certain of it, Napoleon felt it was impossible to place full reliance on the two countries, alliance with whom would alone make it impossible for the Tsar to open hostilities—Austria and Sweden.

On reaching Stockholm, on the 5th of October, 1810, in the frame of mind already described, Bernadotte immediately adopted an attitude diametrically opposed to what Paris had every right to expect. The new Crown Prince of Sweden unbosomed himself freely to

**Bernadotte's  
Attitude.**

## BETWEEN SPAIN AND RUSSIA

Tchernitcheff, who, between two visits of espionage to France, had come, on behalf of the Tsar, to find out how the land lay in Sweden. Alexander, Bernadotte assured him, "might lead his armies to Constantinople, Vienna or Warsaw (not to mention Paris), without fearing the slightest movement on the part of Sweden, whose sole aim it was to remain at one with Russia." The wily native of Bearne added that he had "become a whole-hearted northerner," an assertion which, in view of the habitual intemperance and exaggeration of his language, should have been taken with a pinch of salt. The French Minister thought he was merely a "hot-head," but he was wrong not to take him seriously. Far from bringing the country of his adoption over to France, the ex-Marshal was, as a matter of fact, seriously meditating how best to separate her from his native land.

And Austria, in spite of Metternich's protestations, was proving quite as much of a broken reed. The Chancellor, on his return to Vienna, had been obliged to take drastic steps to counteract the impression made by Alopeus and his mission on the Austrian aristocracy and even on his own Government officials, though his secret aims dictated the utmost circumspection. Thus neither Austria nor Sweden was at the Emperor's disposal. And he could count as little on the friendship of his new father-in-law, Francis II, as on the loyalty of Joseph's brother-in-law, the disquieting Bernadotte.

The conflict with Russia was destined to become more embittered as the months passed by, and England, duly primed as to the state of affairs, cherished hopes amply sufficient for bolstering up public opinion in London, though the Government was well aware that nothing would withstand the shock of a disaster in the Peninsula. And it anxiously awaited news from Torres Vedras.

\* \* \* \* \*

For six weeks General Foy had seen the Emperor on several occasions and endeavoured to extract from him a definite decision in favour of Masséna's army. As a matter of fact, like so many others, he was really expecting the Emperor himself to go. But Napoleon, having contented himself, as we have seen, with sending Drouet's corps to reinforce Masséna, and ordering Soult to support his exalted colleague, did nothing further.

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Meanwhile, the Prince of Essling, held up before the Torres Vedras lines, was eating out his heart with impatience, while he kept his army in a purely expectant attitude. **Masséna at Torres Vedras.** During the interval, Ney's and Junot's General Headquarters had developed into hotbeds of opposition where the irritation with Masséna, "who had grown old," became every day more pronounced. The rank and file, too, like their leaders, were getting more and more demoralised. There were times when one hope alone kept their courage alive; they all expected great things from Foy's mission—a huge army to the rescue, perhaps even the arrival of the "Little Corporal" himself. Under his command, with what renewed ardour and confidence would they not have launched the attack on Wellington!

In due course Foy returned bringing the Master's orders with him. Both banks of the Tagus were to be secured, thereby hemming in the Torres Vedras lines, and all preparations were to be made for the army to link up with the 5th corps which Soult was to detach from the Army of Andalusia. As soon as 80,000 men had been mustered, the attack was to be opened. The whole operation was held up for Soult to obey his orders, and Foy, in a pathetic letter, "conjured" him "to make himself the real conqueror of Portugal"—he used the phrase in an endeavour to allay the latter's foolish jealousy of Masséna. At last the Prince of Essling made up his mind to rouse himself from his inertia, and on the 17th of February he assembled his lieutenants, together with Foy, and laid his plan of campaign before them. They did nothing but raise objections, and, moreover, displayed the profoundest scepticism regarding the arrival of Soult. They were perfectly right; as the resistance offered by Cadiz was chaining Victor's corps outside the walls of

that town, Soult, arguing from the situation, declared that, for the time being, he was bound to remain in this sphere of operations which had been so unfortunately created. As a matter of fact, he found a way out of the difficulty by promising to help Masséna, not by marching on Lisbon as the Emperor had ordered, which would have taken him too far away from his main body, but by seizing Badajoz, the Spanish garrison of which might be dangerous to the rear of

## BETWEEN SPAIN AND RUSSIA

the Army of Portugal. And this was the reply he conveyed to Masséna.

This was the last straw, and Masséna's patience was exhausted. He felt he had been abandoned and betrayed, and in a state of extreme exasperation and bitterness, he decided upon what he now regarded as inevitable—the abandonment of the siege of the Torres Vedras lines and a retreat on Coimbra. As a matter of fact, he skilfully succeeded in hiding his movements from the enemy; the retreat began on the 4th of March, and on the 6th,

**Masséna**  
**Retreats.** Wellington was still unaware of it. When at length he discovered it, he was afraid it was merely a feint to lure him out of his famous lines, and he decided all too late to hurl himself on the rear of the French as they fell back.

Nevertheless, the Prince of Essling was in a dangerous predicament; confronted by the ruin of all their high hopes, his lieutenants had now reached the point of entirely disregarding his orders. As the movements were carried out without any coherent plan, the retreat slowed down and eventually developed into chaos; Wellington, meanwhile, had made up his mind to follow in pursuit. This made it impossible to call a halt, and the whole of Portugal had to be abandoned; on the 22nd of March the unfortunate army, completely demoralised, returned to Spain.

When Masséna decided to take the offensive again, Ney refused, point-blank, to carry out the order and the Prince of Essling, at the end of his tether, deprived him of his command. But still hoping to return to Portugal, he asked Bessières, who had just taken over command of the northern provinces, to support him, and relying on his comrade's fine promises, he turned on Wellington

**Fuentes de**  
**Oñoro.** and caught him up at Fuentes de Oñoro. Here the old Lion of Rivoli once more rose up in all his might and, on the 3rd of May, inflicted on his adversary a defeat which the intervention of Bessières might have transformed into a magnificent victory for the French. But Bessières did not move, and his failure to come to Masséna's support resulted in the victory remaining sterile. Masséna, exasperated beyond endurance, was once again forced to retreat, and did not stop till he reached Salamanca. That was the end!

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

The army which, six months previously, looked as though it were going to drive the English out of Portugal, foundered in despair; it laid the whole blame on the shoulders of Masséna, unjustly censuring the old warrior, who, as a matter of fact, had been betrayed right and left.

Masséna's Failure. Napoleon also laid the responsibility for the reverse on the illustrious soldier whom he never employed again. His wrath was inspired by his knowledge of what the consequences of so grave a disaster would be. By magnifying Wellington it would put fresh heart into England's resistance; it would encourage the warlike propensities of the Tsar, and raise fresh hopes of revenge throughout Europe. "It is a reverse of the direst import for the French army," wrote Roger de Damas from Vienna. "Its effect on public opinion in Spain and the determination of her people will be incalculable. As regards England, this success will put the Government party once more on its feet, and should make that country redouble her efforts on behalf of Spain, thus indefinitely postponing the time when Napoleon will be master there, if, indeed, that is ever destined to come about." And this was the general sentiment. All the European Governments were bristling with eagerness and the peoples were full of hope. Moreover, the General Staffs also drew their own conclusions—Wellington, it was declared, had at last discovered the right way to deal with Napoleon's genius and the *furia francese*. Russian Generals were already studying "Wellington's methods," which Russia was in a position to apply on a vast scale, and the prospect of now being almost certain of success in repelling a French invasion encouraged

the Tsar and his General Staff to run the risk of being called upon to do so. From every point of view, nothing was more fraught with danger for Napoleon than the "lesson" of Torres Vedras.

The "Lesson" of Torres Vedras. But the Emperor regarded it merely as a proof of the incapacity which seemed to paralyse his best soldiers as soon as they crossed the Pyrenees, and he blamed Spain and her God-forsaken people even more than the hapless Masséna. He was now more than ever determined, by a complete change of policy, to have done with the whole sorry business. Spain was to be restored to Ferdinand VII; this would oblige the English to leave the country, and the 200,000 men who, for the last three years, had been kept on the

## BETWEEN SPAIN AND RUSSIA

other side of the Pyrenees, were to return to France. This would enable him to confront Russia, and either force her to keep the terms of the alliance or overwhelm her beneath his hosts. What was the possession of Spain compared with the results to be attained by the crushing of Russia, the last Power in Europe capable of standing in his path?

\* \* \* \* \*

For some weeks past Napoleon had seen so clearly into the Tsar's intentions that he calculated this extraordinary "ally" would be ready to open hostilities by the spring of 1811.

And he was not far wrong. At that very moment Alexander was examining the possibility of a sudden attack and doing all in his power to secure allies—against his "ally." The best proof of this lies in the ever more pressing attentions he paid to the Poles of the Grand Duchy; in order to win them over he did not hesitate to confide his plans, which were already mature, to Adam Czartoryski, together with his reasons for feeling confident of success; he was arranging for a regular invasion of the French Empire with 300,000 Europeans under his own command. As for Austria, he was ready to make such heavy sacrifices to win her over that she could not possibly hesitate; in exchange for what remained to her of Galicia, which he would ask her to hand over to him for the purpose of restoring the Kingdom of Poland under his own sceptre, he had decided, he declared, to offer her Wallachia and Moldavia as far as the Sereth—in short, to make her a present of the Balkans.

Meanwhile he was continuing to concentrate all the forces of his Empire on the colossal line of "positions" he had created behind the Niemen. The mobilisation of these troops was, moreover, carried out with such care and circumspection that, for months, nobody outside Russia had the smallest suspicion of it. It was imperative for it to be kept secret until the success of the diplomatic mobilisation—if I may be allowed to use the expression—was on a fair way to being secured.

As a matter of fact, the Tsar found this more difficult than the mobilisation of his troops. Metternich showed extreme diffidence

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about receiving any overtures from St. Petersburg. On the 13th of February, 1811, Alexander decided to take drastic steps with Austria, and made the famous offer of the Balkans to Saint-Julian, her Ambassador. In exchange for Galicia he would cede the Principalities as far as the Sereth to Austria, and, he added grandiloquently, he "would also throw in Serbia." But Metternich did not allow himself to be inveigled by these fulsome promises; he was not so certain as Alexander of the dazzling success which was bound to attend an attack on Napoleon, even though it came like a bolt from the blue. Saint-Julian was instructed to temporise, though Metternich took care not to warn Napoleon—which in itself almost amounted to treachery; for after these overtures, there could be little doubt that the Tsar was also seeking in other directions for the elements of a coalition against his Parisian "ally."

As a matter of fact, he was feeling his way with Prussia and even with the German Courts, which were regarded as being most devoted to the policy of France. But it was, above all, in Stockholm that he was conducting his diplomatic offensive with the greatest energy. Here, as we know, he found the ground thoroughly well prepared. On the 6th of February, 1811, Bernadotte had asked a most extraordinary favour of Napoleon. In order to establish his prestige at one fell swoop in the country of his adoption he

**Bernadotte** was anxious to make her a magnificent present;  
**Wishes to** now Norway, at that time under Denmark, was,  
**Seize Norway.** he declared, "aspiring" to join Sweden. If

Napoleon would allow him to fall upon that country and wrest her from Denmark, the Crown Prince, aware of Russia's designs, promised to provide the Emperor of the French with "50,000 Swedes in the spring and a further 60,000 in July." The Gascon might just as well have offered 200,000. Napoleon, surprised, not to say insulted, by this unexpected request, did not even weigh the consequences of a refusal; the King of Denmark was one of his most loyal friends, and it hurt

**Napoleon's** him to think that any one could imagine him  
**Indignation.** capable of betraying a friendly Power without any kind of reason or even excuse. He placed the onus of the suggestion at the door of that "madcap" of a Crown Prince and made no attempt to tone down the severity of his reply.

## BETWEEN SPAIN AND RUSSIA

The contempt shown by the Emperor for an idea which he dubbed "pure folly" filled Bernadotte with even greater mortification than the refusal itself. The Tsar did not long remain in ignorance of the fury with which the Crown Prince, ever a hot-head, met this rebuff. And he proceeded to assail him with flattering offers, with the result that as early as the end of February, 1811, though nothing had been positively settled, he felt that in his crusade against Napoleon he could place far greater reliance on the ex-Marshal of France than on those who had been defeated at Jena and Wagram. He continued, however, to ingratiate himself with all parties and did not despair of securing, before the end of the summer, a new coalition against the man who still remained, officially, his ally of Tilsit.

But Napoleon was extremely loath to believe that war was really imminent. Outraged, however, by the ukase of the 31st of December, 1810, he continued to lodge protests in St. Petersburg against this cruelly unfriendly measure which, without warning of any sort, had cut the commercial bonds between two allied countries and thus, in his eyes, constituted a sort of moral act of aggression. But he was still ignorant of the web for catching the elements of a new coalition which his "ally" Alexander was spinning; he was still ignorant of the steps taken by that same Alexander to concentrate his forces in the positions already prepared; he was even ignorant of the construction of this line of defences which the Tsar, quivering with excitement, was already picturing in his mind's eye as a base of attack. But whatever the precautions taken, the facts were bound to leak out in the end.

**Napoleon  
Prepares to  
Fight Russia.**

The Poles of the Grand Duchy heard the sound of the pickaxes at work behind the Niemen, and they warned Napoleon. At this grave revelation the scales suddenly fell from the Emperor's eyes—thus it was not a mere rupture of the alliance, but war on a grand scale for which that knave of a "Greek," that traitor, was preparing, and profiting by his staunch friendship, was trying to spring a surprise on him!

Feeling that he had been caught napping, he took immediate steps. Davout, who, from Danzig, had been acting as a sort of proconsul in northern Germany, and happened to be in Paris at the time, was instantly sent back to his general headquarters with perfectly clear instructions—the Emperor intended to make the



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

corps under his command the solid kernel of the colossal army which would be required between the Rhine and the Vistula if France was not to be taken by surprise. The news of Davout's return to Germany was quite enough to disconcert Alexander. As he had been found out, he was obliged to renounce all idea of a sudden attack. And he made fresh protestations of friendship, explaining that the ukase of the 31st of December, 1810, had been forced upon him by economic necessity which he was the first to deplore, and furthermore, denying that he was making any military preparations. True, the news of the annexation of Oldenburg had upset him, but he assured Caulaincourt that he would never make it a *casus belli*. Nevertheless, hugging his

### **The Tsar's Duplicity.**

grievance—the only one for which Napoleon had ever been responsible as far as he was concerned—he determined to make the most of it and lodged bitter complaints with all the European Governments. None the less, he continued to reassure Caulaincourt—nothing on earth would induce him to engineer a war! He was astonished that Paris should suspect him of such a fell design! And he gave his word of honour that he had not got "a single extra bayonet in the ranks." Yet at this very moment he was revealing to Czartoryski the forces he had at his command, which, he declared, he was increasing every day, and was also boasting to the Swedish Minister, whom he was anxious to win over to his side, that he had created "thirteen new regiments." But to the French Ambassador he declared again and again, "I am hiding nothing, General. I have nothing to hide!"

Meanwhile, Kurakin, the Russian Ambassador in Paris, had been instructed to lodge a protest with Champagny against the annexation of Oldenburg, which constituted a violation of the treaties. Napoleon insisted on explaining the matter himself; he wrote to

### **Napoleon Writes to the Tsar.**

the Tsar and confided the letter to Tchernitcheff to take to St. Petersburg. He justified the annexation of Oldenburg on the ground that the little State "had always been the centre of a contraband trade with England," and added that he had offered the Duke a principality at least the equal of the one of which he had been despoiled. And returning to the ukase of the 31st of December, 1810, which everybody interpreted as denoting a "change of system," he

## BETWEEN SPAIN AND RUSSIA

declared that, owing to it, public opinion in England had come to regard the Franco-Russian alliance as non-existent. Whereupon he, in his turn, begged Alexander "to clear away all these clouds."

For the time being this letter remained unanswered. The Tsar confined himself to assuring Caulaincourt again and again of his pacific intentions and friendly feeling, though all the while he was leaving no stone unturned to gain his end. But he abandoned all idea of a sudden attack, and postponed for a year the war which he had been planning for the spring of 1811. Napoleon, however, had now been warned, and had no intention of allowing himself to be hoodwinked again. From that moment, order followed order in hot succession, all aiming at one end—the formation in Germany of an ever-growing army to be pushed with the least possible amount of noise and commotion from the Elbe to the Oder, and from the Oder to the Vistula. But for this colossal movement to be carried out without causing a stir, much time was still required. And, like the Tsar, Napoleon made up his mind to gain a glorious year of respite.

Moreover, he did not confine himself to military preparations; against the obvious menace now presented by Russia, he, too, was determined to secure the support of the European Powers. With this object in view, he proceeded to sound them all.

Thus it was across Europe that the two allies, whose friendship was now turned to enmity, were seeking each other out through the twilight of secret negotiations. They both acted with the utmost circumspection—the Tsar because he had been forced to abandon all idea of a surprise attack, Napoleon because he required time. There was more than one reason for this delay: first and foremost, the fact that "the Empire was expecting an heir any day." And before once more setting forth for war, the Emperor was anxious to see family affairs and the problems of Rome and of Spain settled, so that the heritage of the child about to be born should be definitely secured.

**SOURCES** (for Chapters XXXVI, XXXVII, and XXXVIII). *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XXI, XXII). *Correspondance d'Alexandre* (already mentioned). *Memoirs and Reminiscences* by Beugnot, I, Caulaincourt, Captain François, the volunteer Billon, and the Comte de Damas. Coignet, *Cahiers*. Bugeaud, *Lettres*.

**WORKS.** Those already mentioned by Sorel (VII), Vandal (II and III), Driault (III), Masson (V, VI, VII), Lumbroso, Madelin (*Fouché*), Morvan, G. de Grandmaison, Pingaud (*Bernadotte*), and the Grand Duke Nicholas, *Alexandre Gachot, Vie militaire de Masséna*.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE KING OF ROME

#### *His Birth and Baptism*

Twenty-two guns fired; "It is a son!" The King of Rome presented to the troops. The consequences of his birth. The family thrones condemned. The annexation of Rome inevitable; having been decreed by the *senatus consultum*, the birth of an heir makes it final and irrevocable. The Pope at Savona. Napoleon wishes to see him installed in Paris. Attitude of the clergy. The Pope postpones the institution of the "nominated" Bishops. The Roman quarrel spreads to the religious sphere. The ecclesiastical Council of 1809. The Emperor endeavours to impose his own nominees on the Chapters. Maury, the "nominated" Archbishop of Paris. The Astros-Portalis case. Another ecclesiastical Council. Napoleon reconciles himself to the idea of a National Council. Deputation of Bishops to the Pope; unsatisfactory termination of the negotiations; the Pope refuses to give up Rome. The Baptism. The Emperor not quite himself. First rift between the Emperor and the people.

ON the 20th of March, 1811, at ten o'clock in the morning, the guns began to boom in Paris. On the previous evening the Empress had felt her first labour pains and the Capital duly informed, was on tiptoe with expectation. For weeks past the whole world had had its eyes fixed on the cradle that was to receive the child. There was a sort of mystic sentiment abroad—if Heaven granted the Emperor's desire by sending him a son, it obviously meant that he was still the chosen of the Lord. On the Bourse, speculation took a more practical form in the shape of huge bets on the sex of the child about to be born.

When the first gun was fired, all traffic came to a standstill and there was a general rush to the windows. As a princess was entitled to only twenty-one guns, excitement reached fever pitch when that number was reached. At the twenty-second, there was an explosion of joy. A deafening shout of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" rose from a hundred thousand throats. "The

**Birth of  
the King  
of Rome.**

## THE KING OF ROME

crowd," wrote an eye-witness, "filled the streets; workmen downed tools, shopkeepers put up their shutters; there was talking, hand-shaking and kissing all round, to the accompaniment of deafening cheers." In the twinkling of an eye, huge processions were formed, all making their way to the Tuileries. The last of the Royalists, for one brief moment, laid down their arms. "The twenty-second gun," wrote one of them, "was a knock-out blow; we felt it had killed the whole Bourbon family!"

At last, after acute anxiety, the Empress had given birth, at a quarter-past nine, to a son. Almost before he had been dressed in his lace robes, the Emperor took him in his arms, and leaving the Empress's room, carried him to the gallery where the Court had been waiting for hours, and raised him above their heads amid the wildest acclamations. At that moment his broad, pale face was seen to be lit up by a smile, the expression of which, it was declared, defied description. A great poet alone has succeeded in depicting the scene in immortal verse.

Et lui! L'orgueil gonflait sa puissante narine;  
Les deux bras, jusqu'alors croisés sur sa poitrine,  
S'étaient enfin ouverts!  
Et l'enfant, soutenu dans sa main paternelle,  
Inondé des éclairs de sa fauve prune  
Rayonnait au travers!\*

Meanwhile the crowd in the Tuileries was growing ever larger, and the troops massed in the Carrousel kept their eyes fixed on the palace. The Emperor, making his way through the throng of courtiers, went out on to the balcony, with the child in his arms. He was greeted by the surging masses with a frenzied outburst of enthusiasm; suddenly, through the shouts and cheers, the officers could be heard rapping out brief words of command, and the troops began to move for the march past. One witness,

**His  
Presentation  
to the Crowd.**

\* Meantime, he, with his nostrils dilated with pride,  
And his arms, till then crossed, now extended and wide,  
In welcome and praise  
Took the child to his breast in parental embrace,  
While through his eagle-beams its infantile face  
Shone forth in bright rays.

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

a staunch Royalist, who can hardly be suspected of sharing the general sentiment, wrote: "They marched with firm and resolute steps, their eyes lit up with the flame of enthusiasm." And tears of joy were seen to flow down those sunburnt cheeks.

The Emperor, too, for a brief moment, regarded the birth as a sort of mystic confirmation, a definite decree of Fate. "Now," he exclaimed, "the most glorious period of my reign has begun." But, alas! that day marked the beginning of the end.

For one brief instant Europe, too, bowed her head, as it were before a decree of Heaven. The Tsar, naturally, was all smiles and congratulations—in the dim distance he was busy digging the child's grave!

\* \* \* \* \*

But the birth made more pressing than ever two problems which, especially for the last year, had been occupying much of Napoleon's attention. The child, being the longed-for son, was at once heir to the Empire and King of Rome.

### **Consequences of the Birth.**

Did "heir to the Empire" mean merely heir to France, now a country of 132 departments? Napoleon, for his part, meant his son to be heir to the Grand Empire, which stretched from Brest to Warsaw, and from Hamburg to Naples and Madrid—he was to be the future Emperor of the West.

There had been a time when he had intended this Empire to be a "federative" Empire parts of which were to be confided to his brothers and sisters. But having been quick to see the mistakes made by his family, he had, ever since his marriage, regarded them quite mercilessly, with the result that from that moment not one of the Bonaparte thrones was worth a moment's purchase. On the 20th of March their fate was finally sealed.

The Emperor had founded a family—the "fourth dynasty" was assured, and he meant the whole Empire to be reserved for it; things were to be so arranged that "his sons"—for he was now in a position to indulge in the highest hopes—should not, at some distant date, find those of his brothers, whom he had so rashly crowned, standing in their light.

As far as Lucien was concerned, there was nothing further to be done. In August, 1810, he had put the coping-stone to his mis-

## THE KING OF ROME

deeds by taking refuge in England, "among the noble islanders," as he called them, who accorded him the welcome due

**The Family  
Thrones  
Condemned.** to a victim of the man he himself dubbed "a tyrant"; while Louis, on losing his throne, had fled

to Austria to hide the sullen rancour which his literary interests did but little to assuage. Like Lucien, he, too, abused "the tyrant." The other brothers, who were still in possession of their thrones, were quite ready to join the chorus; in any case, they remained on cordial terms with the two "exiles," more especially Joseph, who felt his position every day becoming more and more insecure. For the last six months he had been trembling for his throne and, in order to keep it, he had eaten humble pie, and assured the Ambassador that he was merely "safeguarding

**Joseph's  
Attitude.** it for one of the Emperor's sons." But, feeling that Napoleon had decided to have done with the matter, and relying on the strange ascendancy which, as the elder, he had always exercised over his brilliant younger brother, he left Madrid for Paris on the 23rd of April, 1811. He succeeded in achieving his object, for on the 16th of June he returned unfortunately still King of Spain, though for how long was a question he might well ask himself. Had not Louis also returned to Amsterdam, in similar fashion, three months before his fall? Moreover, Napoleon had been careful to point out that Joseph no longer possessed, and in fact never had possessed, any right to a crown. "My senior—what, he! The heir to my father's vineyard, I presume!"

Jerome's position was equally precarious and his fall seemed imminent. Napoleon had not hesitated to take away a part of his kingdom and annex it to the Empire, and Jerome, after an outburst of mad fury, had been obliged to humble himself to the ground to keep what remained. *A fortiori* the Murats in Naples had everything to fear from the Emperor's changed attitude,

**Murat's  
Attitude.** more especially as Joachim stoutly maintained that he had won his kingdom by the sword, and being utterly devoid of all political acumen, proclaimed as much from the house-tops. As a matter of fact, he owed his Crown entirely to his marriage and had thus benefited only indirectly by the clan spirit which, in the beginning, had presided over the distribution of Thrones. Fully aware of his

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

resentment, the Italians who thronged his Court flattered him with prospects of a great destiny—he was a Latin soldier who was bound to impose his will on all and sundry and create a united Italy under his sceptre. Napoleon was fully aware of what General Lamarque dubbed Murat's "*gasconneries*," which he took steps to circumvent by sternly reminding him that he was a vassal King. After the birth of the King of Rome he adopted an even more uncompromising attitude, and Murat, who had hastened to attend the baptism of the infant monarch, was so severely taken to task that he left in high dudgeon, breathing fire and slaughter. "I have 45,000 men," he muttered, "and can raise 60,000. If he only saw how my subjects loved me he would know who I am!" But Napoleon, raising a hand, which Caroline, who had remained in Paris, with difficulty persuaded him to drop, forced this royal rebel back into his palace for a while, with the sword of Damocles still hanging over his head.

In short, the whole family was in disgrace. For, as I have already observed, they were no longer real "princes of the blood"; the princes of the blood were the King of Rome and any younger sons who might be born to the Emperor and for whom the imperial fiefs were to be reserved. After all, Joseph had perhaps discovered the formula that saved him, when he let it be understood that he "merely wished to nurse the Throne of Spain for one of the Emperor's sons." The day on which the first of these sons was born settled the problem of the family to its disadvantage.

\* \* \* \* \*

The infant heir to the Empire had been proclaimed King of Rome before his birth. This constituted a title of possession and a declaration that Rome would never be restored to the successors of Saint Peter. The Emperor had not waited for the birth of his son for the fact to be officially proclaimed, for the *senatus consultum*, which, on the 17th of February, 1810, bestowed on the heir to the throne the title of King of Rome, also confirmed the annexation of the Roman States to the Empire and decided the fate of the Sovereign Pontiffs. This official act seemed, to all intents and purposes, to have settled the Roman question; on

## THE KING OF ROME

the contrary, however, it was this very act that perpetuated it. If the Pope refused to resign himself to the *senatus consultum*, it meant that he would hotly oppose it; in which case the crisis would be precipitated.

It also meant that this crisis would drag the Pope and the Emperor from the temporal to the spiritual domain; and herein lay the danger. True, this did not appear so deplorable to some of the senators who were called upon to ratify the imperial decree uniting Rome to France, the majority of them being old revolutionaries and "philosophers" of the Institute, one and all hostile to priests.

Be this as it may, on the 14th of February, 1810, the Minister of State, Regnaud de Saint-Jean-d'Angély, presented the case for the Crown before the Senate; giving his own résumé of the differences between the Pope and the Emperor, he tried to prove that the latter had been forced to take Rome. But how great would be the glory with which he would endow the Eternal City! Whereupon the Senate appointed a Commission which, of course, reached the foregone conclusion. When Lacépède, who had been made *rapporteur*, presented himself before the Senate on the 17th, he advanced further arguments, laying special emphasis on the "history of the Popes, with its long list of political delinquencies, bare-faced crimes, and outrages against the sacred persons of Kings," which no doubt caused considerable perturbation among the score of "regicides" who had seats in the House. And everybody was surprised that when the ballot was taken the *senatus consultum* should have been passed by only 82 votes, with 11 against and 3 blanks. At all events, the annexation of Rome was confirmed by this solemn enactment, and assumed a particularly grave complexion in view of the bitter and aggressive speeches made by Regnaud and Lacépède.

I repeat, Pius VII, if he was not absolutely crushed by the decree, had every right to be exasperated. "Temporal power belongs to the Church," he had declared to Radet. "We are but the administrator thereof. The Emperor can cast us into prison, but he will never wrest that from us." Now we already know the complete domination exercised over the Holy Father by his conscience, which, in 1801 and 1804, drove him to make



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concessions, but after 1806 forced him to various acts of resistance. To browbeat such a conscience was no easy matter and the conflict threatened to become interminable.

The Pope was living at Savona under surveillance rather than imprisoned. Surrounded by every mark of respect by the high imperial officials, chief among them Chabrol, the Prefect of Montenotte, he was nevertheless entirely isolated from the outside world, and the only complaint which this gentle simple monk had to make was that he had nobody with whom to take counsel. But it was precisely because Napoleon regarded him as being easily influenced that he used all his ingenuity to deprive him of those "pernicious" Cardinals whom he constantly accused of having "been the undoing of that worthy man." And he hoped thereby to persuade him to accede to his wishes.

But Pius VII showed no signs of doing so, though he might well have lost heart when he saw that the bull of excommunication which he had hurled against the Emperor had fallen very flat, not only within the Empire, but also throughout the rest of Europe.

At first even the French clergy appeared to share this indifference. The perfectly legitimate devotion felt by these priests to the man whom, in various dithyrambic charges, the Bishops had so often extolled as "the restorer of the altars" and "the new Constantine," had led them, ever since 1806, to regard the conflict between the Pope and the Emperor as profoundly regrettable, but to be laid at the door of Pius VII rather than that of Napoleon. They deplored the disagreement and hoped it would be amicably settled, but officially appeared to ignore it. Napoleon's mistake was that before long he tried to force the clergy, who were really deeply embarrassed, to pronounce their verdict.

As a matter of fact, he had grown too much accustomed to playing the Louis XIV, and calling them "his clergy," and had thus come to believe that, if there were serious developments, he would have unanimous and resolute support, particularly on the part of his Bishops.

Moreover, in 1810 he was miles away from wishing to induce the clergy to follow him in a schism or even a semi-schism. Con-  
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vinced that he would prevail upon the Pope to give way, he was also persuaded that the dispute could not possibly have any repercussions in the sphere of religion. When, as early as 1808, he had been warned by Cardinal Fesch, at that time French Ambassador in Rome, of the possible results of the conflict that had just been inaugurated, he had shrugged his shoulders over his uncle's letter: "I could only regard it as the vapourings of a febrile imagination," had been his stern reply,

### **Plan to Install the Pope in Paris.**

"and I advise you and all who conjure up such chimaeras . . . to take a course of cold baths." Meanwhile his own "imagination," soaring aloft in ever more sublime flights of fancy, was making him regard the transfer of the Papacy to Paris as a perfectly feasible proposition. He would install it in the Archbishop's Palace and make the Île de la Cité a sort of miniature Papal State in which the curial offices and the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See would be housed. Far from wishing to provoke a schism, he had every intention of signing a new Concordat with Pius VII which would make even more intimate the union of the two Powers, "the two halves of God—the Pope and the Emperor," as the poet described them.

Meanwhile, the Pope still remained "obdurate." But this did not cause the Emperor any anxiety regarding the religious peace of his Empire, since he still relied on the support of *his* clergy. "I restored them, I maintain them and do everything for them," he declared. "It is impossible for them not to be devoted to me." He now constantly referred to the Gallican Church, and bolstered up his confidence by regarding *his* Bishops as the successors of those who in the past had so often supported the Kings of France against Rome. Here, again, he was doubly

### **Attitude of the Bishops.**

mistaken. True, while the vast majority of Bishops were extremely devoted to his person, many of them had no love for his régime, since they detested the Revolution from which it had sprung. Though they held the House of Saint-Louis in pious memory, they sincerely regarded the author of the Concordat, whom the Pope himself had consecrated, as the elect of Heaven, the Lord's anointed. Moreover, they had received consideration and even favours from the imperial Government for which they were deeply grateful. But

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all this did not make them proof against the call of conscience. Certain of the Bishops who owed their position to the Concordat might individually have remained Gallicans, but they owed their position to the very event which had put the last stone on the grave of the Gallican Church. And a Pius VII, even in captivity at Savona, was, in their eyes, a thousand times more venerable and even awe-inspiring than the Alexanders and the Clements had been to the French prelates of the 17th century, although Bossuet himself had countenanced Louis XIV's opposition to them. The reason for this was that, at the behest of Bonaparte himself, Rome had, at one moment, been called upon to despoil the Bishops of the *Ancien Régime*, the last representatives of the doctrines of 1682, with the result that the Gallican Church had been given its death-blow.

Furthermore, however much they may have wished to be amenable to the restorer of the altars, and even supposing them capable of once more proclaiming, in 1810, the principles of 1682, there was one consideration which might well have filled them with fear—the exaggerated language and violent behaviour to which the Emperor was inevitably committed. For the author of the Concordat was now inveighing against the Papacy in terms very different from the haughty but measured language of Louis XIV; his tone, on the contrary, was far more reminiscent

**Napoleon's Attitude.** of the extravagant denunciations which, in 1791 and 1792, had reverberated through the Assemblies and the Clubs. "The Triple Crown," he wrote, "is a monstrous creation of pride and ambition, entirely out of keeping with the humility of a Vicar of Jesus Christ." And, lo and behold! to support his contention he had recourse to adversaries of the Church, men like Daunou and Grégoire, both of them but lately in disgrace, entrusting to them the task of crushing Rome beneath the weight of a violently tendencious erudition. Support of this nature was already forcing the dispute outside the sphere to which the Emperor himself had intended to confine it and was quite sufficient to make the Bishops give pause.

Herein, I repeat, lay the main danger—the transformation of the political dispute into one of religion.

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The excommunication, as I have already observed, seemed to hang fire. The Pope, moreover, did not wish to have the Bull published, although it was couched in sufficiently vague terms. But the Concordat itself furnished him with a weapon which he immediately made up his mind to use, more especially as it really relieved him of the necessity for taking action.

**The Pope  
Refuses  
Bulls of  
Institution.**

The Emperor "nominated" the Bishops, but the latter could exercise their functions only after they had been "instituted" by the Pope. If Pius VII systematically refused to institute new Bishops, dioceses which had fallen vacant would remain unfilled and part of the religious life of the nation would be suspended. In the old days Innocent XI, "the saintly mule," in his struggle with Louis XIV, had used the same weapon and had left many dioceses vacant for years at a time—they soon numbered 35—and in the face of this manœuvre the Great King had eventually been obliged to lower his colours. Fortified by this precedent, Pius VII, another "saintly mule," made up his mind to confine himself to this somewhat dangerous form of war and this perfect application of the power of inertia. For the last two years he had not confirmed a single nomination and at the beginning of 1810

**Napoleon's  
Annoyance.**

there were already 27 dioceses without a Bishop. Napoleon was seriously annoyed, and nearly everybody jumped to the conclusion that, unable to tolerate being checkmated by a priest, he had been driven to schism. All his enemies were jubilant. "Bonaparte," it was declared, "has been forced to complete the revolution against religion which hitherto he had only dared to broach." As a matter of fact, such a policy had never been further from his thoughts. In 1810 he had written to the Roman deputies: "As the eldest son of the Church, I have no wish to leave her bosom," and again on the 6th of January, 1811, addressing the Canons of Notre-Dame, he said: "There is no question here of dogmas; they constitute the basis of the religion necessary for social order; I respect them; it is my religion."

At first he had hoped to cajole the Pope by alarming his conscience. By making the necessary concessions in 1801 and 1804, the Holy Father had restored religion in France; was he now going to resist the Emperor and thereby expose this religion to the gravest

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perils? True, at first the Emperor did not make the parish priests feel the effects of his displeasure, but, as early as 1809, he had shown a tendency to be extremely hard on all the other religious bodies, orders, companies, missions, etc. As a matter of fact, he maintained that in so doing he was the real protector of the diocesan clergy: "France," he declared, "had Bishops, Canons, and priests, together with their vicars and curates, and these are the true and worthy organs of religion and of the Sacred Word." By this statement, he hoped to increase the devotion of the clergy, for, since he had failed to move Pius VII by methods which we should call "anti-clerical," he now required the solid support of the episcopate against Rome, and, even before he had made sure of it, he was menacing the Pope with a levy of Gallican croziers.

Pius VII was not perturbed. As a matter of fact, his visit to Paris had enlightened him with regard to the attachment to the traditional religion of a people whom he now felt he had mistakenly imagined lost to it before 1800. He was also

### **The Pope's Attitude.**

convinced that Napoleon—and here again, as we know, he was right—would never allow a few temporary measures to commit him to a more serious enactment; he would never destroy the work of the Consulate, or enter into a conflict with the Church as a whole, or create a schism. As for yielding on the question of temporal power, the Pope did not give the possibility a moment's consideration. When, on the 11th of March, 1810—somewhat late in the day—he had received the news of the *senatus consultum* solemnly confirming the annexation of Rome to the Empire, his attitude of calm tranquillity had for a moment been ruffled, though all he had allowed General César Berthier, one of his superintendents, to see was that he was extremely "irritated." And the General's letter implied that, far from weakening, the Pope's resistance was becoming more determined.

Napoleon had just married and bethought him of making use of his new father-in-law, the Emperor of Austria, "His Apostolic Majesty," in order to overcome the Pope's resistance. Austria was the only Catholic Power who still remained independent; if, "in the name of religious welfare," she were to beg the Holy Father to grant the wishes of the Emperor of the French, what might not be the consequences! Metternich consented and Count von

## THE KING OF ROME

Lebzeltern was sent to Savona. The settlement of certain problems connected with the Austrian Churches was made the pretext of his visit, but his real mission was to persuade the Pope to resign himself, not to leaving Rome, but to returning there under the suzerainty of the Emperor of the French and under the conditions laid down by him.

### **Austrian Mission to the Pope.**

The Austrian diplomat, who was received by Pius VII on the 14th of May, 1810, with open arms, eventually failed in his mission. The Emperor pretended to be indifferent to the rebuff. "I have given up thinking about that business," he wrote to Bigot de Préameneu, his Minister of Public Worship. But, on the contrary, he had "that business" constantly in mind and now cherished but one hope—that *his* clergy would help him out of the difficulty.

But he already had reason to doubt whether they would be over-eager to come to his assistance. In November, 1809, he had convened an ecclesiastical Council to which, under the presidency of Cardinal Fesch, he had summoned, together with other devoted Bishops, the "General" of the Barnabites, Father Fontana, a canonist of repute, and the famous Abbé Émery, the venerable superior of Saint-Sulpice, an act which implied a real desire for enlightenment on his part. But the first step taken by the Council, although the prelates who were most whole-heartedly devoted to the régime had seats in it, was to assure the Pope "of the interest, zeal and affection inspired in it by the position in which the Sovereign Pontiff had been placed." Moreover, it also declared that it saw but one way of reconciling the two adversaries and that was "for the Pope to have absolute freedom, surrounded by his natural advisers." True, it subsequently proved more complaisant to the Emperor. The main point at issue was the Pope's refusal to institute the Bishops who had been nominated; the question was, could the Pope, from motives connected with temporal matters, refuse to play his part in spiritual affairs? The Council replied in the negative. But if the Roman Pontiff refused to act, was there any assembly that could remedy the situation? Again the Council replied in the negative. A National Council could, however, be convened which would address respectful

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remonstrances to the Pope and might perhaps try to establish some sort of canonical institution which would provisionally take the place of the method settled by the Concordat. The Council held long and heated debates; Fontana had retired from it fairly early in the proceedings, while **Its Findings.** Émery refused to sign its conclusions; and it was not until the 11th of January, 1810, that the latter were presented to the Emperor. He found them little to his liking. The necessity of convoking a National Council seemed to him extremely cumbersome; he had no love for assemblies of any kind, particularly if they were large. He accordingly despatched to the Pope two former members of the Roman curia, Cardinal Spina and Cardinal Caselli, whom he felt he could trust and who had been signatories of the Concordat. The Pope gave them a warm welcome, but, convinced by the advice they gave him that they were devoted heart and soul to the Emperor, he retired into his shell and gave them his usual reply.

Napoleon was at the end of his tether; with unwonted violence he heaped anathema on the heads of the whole "parson breed" and enquired of his librarian whether there were any cases of "Emperors having suspended or deposed Popes." Whereupon the Pope took the offensive, or rather made a counter-attack.

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The Emperor, finding he could not break the Pope's resistance with regard to instituting the Bishops in the vacant sees, endeavoured, like a good strategist, to turn the position, and asked the Chapters to elect as "Capitulary Vicars" those priests whom he had himself nominated Bishops and whom the Pope refused to institute, a step which would enable them administer their dioceses.

**The  
Capitulary  
Vicars.**

It was not difficult for the Chapters to see that this was a means of annulling the Pope's authority, and on various pretexts they wriggled out of the obligation.

This exasperated Napoleon—the whole "parson breed" was making fun of him. But he could not wage war on twenty-seven Chapters. However, he determined to make an outstanding example, since the most important see in the country, that of Paris, happened to have been vacant, since the death, in June,

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1808, of Cardinal de Billoy. On the 31st of January, 1809, the Emperor had appointed, as successor, his uncle, Cardinal Fesch, at that time Archbishop of Lyons. He had doubtless hoped that, being *persona grata* in Rome, where, as Ambassador, he had won the friendship of Pius VII, the Cardinal would find it easier than any other prelate to obtain his Bulls of Institution. While awaiting the arrival of the Bulls, the Capitulary Vicars elected by the Chapter had allowed the latter to confer the administration of the diocese on Fesch. Thus the Cardinal had remained one of the 27 Bishops or Archbishops who had been "nominated" but were awaiting their Bulls of Institution.

On the 5th of August, 1810, a Government circular, signed by Bigot, instructed these prelates, in the name of the Emperor, to present themselves in their respective dioceses in order that the

**Quarrel with Fesch.** Chapters might confirm their appointments by conferring on them the title of Capitulary Vicars.

But once again nearly all of them managed to wriggle out of obeying. In Paris Fesch refused point-blank to impose himself on the Canons, whose complaisancy had already gone to considerable lengths. And, after two months of somewhat stormy negotiations between uncle and nephew, Napoleon's patience was exhausted; he sent Fesch back to Lyons and appointed the notorious Cardinal Maury to the see of Paris.

There is no need to refer to the part played in the Constituent Assembly by this priest; a man of extremely humble birth, he had risen to be one of the most ardent defenders of the *Ancien Régime*, and had won considerable prestige, being as loudly acclaimed by the supporters of the Right as he was despised by the partisans of the Left. Extremely clever, possessed of a ready wit rather than a refined intelligence, a glib southerner with very little

**Cardinal Maury.** depth of conviction, he had nevertheless been dragged into the downfall of a whole world. But

spurred less perhaps by ambition than the desire to play the rôle of a man of parts, he came to the conclusion that his enthusiasm had led him up the wrong path, and, tired of kicking his heels in the Umbrian Bishopric, whither the Pope had relegated him with the title of Cardinal, he had made up his mind to abandon the cause he had hitherto so vehemently supported and to rally to the Emperor. Passing from one extreme to the



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

other, this erstwhile bigoted defender of the Church had insinuated himself into Napoleon's good books at a time when the latter was seeking a complaisant tool among the clergy to help him carry out the violent measures forced upon him in his conflict with the Pope. And it was to him that, on the 14th of October, 1810, the Emperor confided the see of Paris with instructions to install himself in it at all costs. The Paris Chapter showed but little inclination to vest in this none too reputable politician the administrative powers they had conceded to Fesch; they raised endless difficulties before they did so, and even then insisted that the spiritual direction of the diocese should remain in the hands of the Capitulary Vicars. When Maury made it plain that he wished to have this also delegated to him, one of the Vicars,

**D'Astros' Opposition.** Abbé d'Astros, put himself at the head of determined and resolute opposition to the Cardinal, who was, in any case, regarded as an intruder.

At this juncture, moreover, d'Astros received from Savona a letter dated the 5th of November, 1810, instructing him to resist any attempt at usurpation on the part of this strange Cardinal, whom Pius VII regarded as the last person in the world who should have accepted the position conferred upon him by the Emperor. Severely censuring Maury for daring to exercise archiepiscopal functions without having received pontifical institution, the Pope seized the opportunity to condemn any nominated Bishop acting in similar fashion; thus the letter overshoot the mark and developed into a regular manifesto. Pius VII must have regarded it in that light, since he had copies of it circulated. As a matter of fact, d'Astros was somewhat alarmed by this dangerous proof of confidence on the part of the Holy Father, and asked the advice of his cousin, the Councillor of State, Portalis, director of the *Librairie*. He, too, was terrified and begged the Capitulary Vicar to keep the formidable letter carefully in his possession, and "in the interests of religion" not to make capital out of it, to which d'Astros consented. But on the 30th of December the police intercepted another courier from Savona bearing a further letter to d'Astros. Dated the 18th, it declared even more explicitly than the first that any episcopal act that Cardinal Maury might take upon himself to perform was null and void in advance. The Emperor, who was immediately

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informed, interpreted this incident as proof of a regular correspondence between the Pope and d'Astros, and regarded it as an excellent opportunity for levelling a blow at the Capitulary Vicar whose constant opposition to Maury was upsetting all his plans.

He immediately had the Capitulary Vicar arrested and his house searched by the police, who found the famous letter of the 5th of November there. On being questioned about it, d'Astros denied that he had either made capital out of it or made a mystery of it—as witness the fact that he had confided in Portalis. While the unfortunate cleric was being conveyed to Vincennes, the Emperor was informed of his admissions.

Napoleon, who, for the last three months, had been trying to discover a "Papist plot," seized upon this as a pretext for declaring that it actually existed. And he deliberately exaggerated the affair in order to put the fear of God into the clerical world, and, above all, into any of its high officials who might be tempted to show the slightest sympathy with the Pope's "machinations."

On the 4th of January, 1811, at a meeting of the Council of State, he questioned Portalis so violently that for the rest of their lives those present went hot and cold at the very thought of it.

He accused him of having broken his oaths which, he added, ill became "the religious sentiments" he professed, and without allowing the hapless Councillor of State time to do more than stammer a few words in reply, he dismissed him from the Council. "I hope, gentlemen," he continued, turning to the other members present, "that such a scene will never occur again; it has given me too much pain. I am not mistrustful, but I might become so. Since I took over the government he is the first man to have betrayed me." And leaning over towards Locré, the Secretary of the Council, he tapped him on the shoulder, exclaiming: "Betrayed, do you hear? Write that down—betrayed!" And he immediately left the room as though he were choking with indignation.

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Truth to tell, he was not nearly as exasperated as he pretended; but, as I have already observed, he wished to make a demonstration. This is proved by the fact that since the desired effect had been produced, Portalis, who had been forbidden to come within a

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hundred miles of Paris, was before long recalled to fill an important post in the magistracy. The desired effect had indeed been produced! The Paris Chapter, terrified by the reverberations

**The Paris  
Chapter  
Terrified.**

of this scene, not only disavowed d'Astros and deprived him of the powers of Capitulary Vicar, but also seized the opportunity literally to throw themselves at the feet of their irate Sovereign.

When they presented themselves in a body to pay him their humble respects, they were forced to listen to a harsh diatribe against the conduct of the Pope; by persistently refusing to carry out the terms of the Concordat, the Emperor declared that Pius VII was driving him to tear up the agreement of 1801, which he had every intention of doing.

In his heart of hearts, he was but little inclined to have recourse to this, however, and for the time being contented himself with placing the unfortunate Pius VII under even stricter supervision.

**The Pope  
Under Stricter  
Supervision.**

"If the Pope indulges in any extravagant outburst," he added, "you will shut him up in the fortress of Savona." This produced a somewhat unfortunate impression. The docile

attitude of the Paris Canons, however, confirmed him in the belief that, under the menace hanging over it, the Church of France would do as he wished. He accordingly reconciled himself to the idea of a National Council, hoping to extract from it a manifestation of loyalty which would eventually force "that old fool" in Savona to give in.

But still mistrusting the spirit which might animate these future "Fathers of the Council," he made up his mind to feel his way beforehand; the Minister of Public Worship was to question some of the Archbishops and the "strongest of the Bishops"

**Another  
Ecclesiastical  
Council.**

about recent events. He also decided to convoke another ecclesiastical Council to which he again summoned Abbé Émery, whose very independence lent him weight. "When the Pope stubbornly re-

fuses to send Bulls to the Bishops nominated by the Emperor . . . what legitimate means are there of giving them canonical institution?" This was the only question of any importance. Napoleon hoped to be able to proclaim that the violation of the Concordat by Pius VII entitled him to abolish it. The Council,

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however, confined itself to pointing out that the Concordat had fixed no limit of time for Papal institution, and deploring the fact that such an omission should have been left in the act of 1801. True, it added that the Pontiff, by persisting without valid reason in refusing the institution of the nominated Bishops, "would be regarded by the whole of Europe as having proclaimed the abolition of the Concordat and the necessity for having recourse to a different method of conferring canonical institution." But it also expressed the opinion that it would be

**Its Findings.** imprudent to denounce the Concordat without having convinced the faithful that "there was no other way of providing Bishops for the Church of France, otherwise the position of the Bishops instituted would be untenable. This change would almost amount to the civil constitution of the clergy with all its attendant evils."

Nothing could have been more disagreeable to the Emperor than this statement. But, without abolishing the whole of the Concordat, would it not be possible to insert the clause that had so unfortunately been forgotten? A National Council, replied the Council, might perhaps be able to suggest a means of so doing.

But the Council itself was not altogether sure of this, and Duvoisin, Bishop of Nantes, whose reputation stood very high, accordingly presented himself before the Emperor to beg his permission for three members of the Council to go to Savona, ostensibly on their own initiative. They would approach the Pope as humble and anxious sons of the Church—as there was a risk of the Concordat being repudiated they would earnestly beseech Pius VII to accept the introduction of the "forgotten" clause. There was little likelihood of their succeeding with the Pontiff, but, in addition, it seemed as though Napoleon himself were determined to ensure the failure of this last desperate measure by introducing various complications. He insisted, in fact, that the delegates sent by the Council should inform the Pope that he would never be allowed to return to Rome except as the simple head of the Catholic religion; if he persisted in refusing to install himself in Paris, Avignon was still at his service, and in that city he would be allowed to enjoy sovereign honours and complete liberty. This inevitably meant alienating Pius VII at the very

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moment when it was a matter of obtaining from him a modification of the Concordat which would deprive him of his last weapon. Furthermore, the Pontiff would be warned that the Emperor was determined to call a National Council forthwith and, if necessary, to denounce the Concordat. The threats and the offers were alike calculated to ensure the failure rather than the success of the negotiations.

As a matter of fact, Napoleon had but little faith in this manœuvre. In spite of his dislike of such a step, he had now made up his mind to convoke the famous Council,

**A National Council to be Called.** the meeting of which he had been dreading for months past. He would have done better to abide

by his first impulse. The least of the evils likely to arise out of this appeal to the Episcopate was that it would proclaim to the whole world that the Roman question was leading to all the developments certain observers had foreseen and prophesied; in order to safeguard the Concordat and religious peace, the Emperor would now be forced to place himself in the hands of the clergy whom, only a short while previously, he had decided to forbid all interference in affairs of State. Moreover, even if the Council were to give him every satisfaction, the problem of the relations between Pope and Emperor would still be insoluble. It had become so on the day when Rome had been annexed to the Empire by a solemn decree demanded of the Senate. As long as the annexation had remained merely the result of a decree, Napoleon might have rescinded the measure. But, foreseeing the birth of a son, he had insisted on the pompous title of King of Rome being created. Thus the Senate had been obliged to make irrevocable an act which the stubborn conscience of the Pope resolutely refused to acknowledge, and which he even declared himself powerless to sanction. Rather than submit to it, Pius VII had used the weapons furnished by his apostolic function—thirty dioceses remained without Bishops, and as a result great confusion was beginning to reign in the religious sphere. Confronted with having to condemn the attitude of the

**The Pope Adamant.** Head of the Catholic world, the Church of France, in a body, refused to do so. This meant that Napoleon was forced to return to the charge. But

the Pope still remained adamant, repeating that he could not

## THE KING OF ROME

go back to Rome except as a sovereign ruler. Could he possibly be allowed to do so? But then, what about the King of Rome?

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The Bishops summoned to attend the Council on the 11th of June had been first called upon to take part in a gathering of a very different nature. It took place in Notre-Dame, where, with unprecedented pomp and ceremony, the poor baby whose birth had led to so many grave consequences was to be baptized.

This solemn ceremony had been fixed for the 9th of June; by midday the soldiers were already lining the streets and the route of this latest triumphal procession **The Baptism.** was solid with the crowd of spectators. But it was not until five o'clock in the evening (the afternoon having been spent in receiving deputations in the Tuileries) that the procession formed up. It was very like the Consecration procession. After an endless string of Court carriages, the baby appeared, in a huge coach drawn by eight horses, lying on the lap of the Comtesse de Montesquiou, who had been appointed "governess to the children of France." The crowd, eager in this imperial festival to seize upon anything that still remained national, hailed with joy the broad red cord of the Legion of Honour standing out brilliantly against the white lace robes—that at least had nothing to do with Austria! The imperial couple followed in "full French Court dress," velvet, silk, ermine, diamonds and diadems—Napoleon a thousand leagues removed from the little hat and the grey riding-coat. Cavalry in brilliant uniforms, picked from Murat's old squadrons, brought up the rear.

In spite of all this magnificence, which has always appealed to the Paris loafer, the people seemed to be much colder on this fine afternoon of June, 1811, than they had been on the icy morning of the 2nd of December, 1804. They had been kept waiting too long. As the hours passed by they began to think of how late they would be for dinner, for, as Frédéric Masson very rightly observes, "the Parisian does not like to have his hours changed and will not shout on an empty stomach." Moreover—and this is significant—all this pomp and show which had pleased him on the 2nd of December, 1804, was what most irritated and upset him on the

**Coldness of  
the People.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

9th of June, 1811, the reason being that the feeling no longer existed which in 1804 had made the people regard as auspicious everything that proceeded from the "Little Corporal," even his protocolic fantasies. But since the birth of the baby everything had conspired to produce an atmosphere of anxiety and discontent. I shall presently describe the economic crisis which was cramping and crushing the life of the country and spreading gloom everywhere. The streets were full of rumours of war with Russia. Catholics were perhaps thinking of the saintly old man who, on the 2nd of December, 1804, had waited at Notre-Dame, with a smile on his lips, for the creator of the Concordat; now the aged Pontiff in captivity could not even send his blessing to the child that was being baptized, and the Concordat, the great instrument of civil peace hailing from the great days of the Consulate, was threatened with destruction. The future was black with clouds, and with workshops closing down, the days already seemed heavy with care. Thus the crowd was far less disposed to wax enthusiastic over these Court officials, three-quarters of whom were now the sons and daughters of the "ci-devant" of Versailles. On the evening before, Savary's police had been obliged to tear down seditious placards from the walls in working-class districts. Who had posted them? And there was some booing, it was said, in the crowd, exasperated by the long delay.

It was seven o'clock by the time the procession reached the church, where the ceremony which might almost have been another Consecration was duly performed. For round the "infant King," high officials, princes and illustrious marshals vied with each other in protocolic fashion in performing the most menial offices. The climax was reached when the little prince, wrapped in an ermine cloak with a long train, was placed in the arms of the old Duc de Valmy; at that supreme moment did the sight of that rough old veteran of a Kellermann call up memories of the plain of Champagne, of Argonne, of volunteers in rags rushing on the foe, while the Convention proclaimed the Republic? It was noticed that the Emperor looked grave and stern. "I was not myself at that moment," he confessed. Perhaps, as he was driving through the streets, he had compared the attitude of the crowd of the 9th of June, 1811, with that of the crowd of the 2nd of December, 1804.

### The Ceremony.

## THE KING OF ROME

But, when the baptism was over, and the Emperor took the King of Rome in his arms, his face lit up. He kissed him three times with real tenderness, and raising him high above his head, turned in all directions and presented him to the congregation. Then at last there was an outburst of cheering which reached the outside of the church.

The procession returned to the Tuileries by way of the quays, and the imperial couple went to the Hôtel de Ville to dine. This was a concession to the Paris bourgeoisie. But the Emperor and Empress, seated on a high platform with two gorgeous canopies above their heads, dined with their crowns still on their heads; in front of this platform, surrounded by the Court, the good folk of Paris were admitted to file past and salute.

### **Napoleon Depressed.**

The Emperor again looked depressed; he gave the impression of longing to have done with a distasteful duty. And he was in no better spirits during the week's festivities that followed.

Altogether the festivities seem to have left on the minds of those present the impression that there was, so to speak, a "lack of harmony" between the Emperor, who had become almost inaccessible, and the people, whose disillusionment began to be noticeable. As the former rose to ever giddier heights, the latter seemed to sink to the depths. Whence came this disharmony, which, having lain dormant and barely visible for the past year, had for a moment flared up in the light of that prodigious show of fireworks—the baptism of the King of Rome?

### **The First Rift between Emperor and People.**

The Empire was at its zenith, and yet, during that summer of 1811, the clear sunlight which, in the depths of the winter of 1805, had flooded the fields of Austerlitz was no more to be found.

**SOURCES.** *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XIX to XXII). Debrotonne, *Lettres inédites*. Lecestre, *Lettres inédites* (II). Memoirs and Reminiscences by Frénilly, Montbel, Madame de la Tour du Pin, Docteur Poumiès de la Siboutie, Camte de Damas (II), Comte de Mérode (I), Consalvi (II), Metternich (II), Madame de Rémusat (III), and Pasquier (I).

**WORKS.** Those already mentioned by Vandal (III), Sorel (VII), Lanzac de Laborie (III, IV), Driault (IV), Masson (V to VIII), and Welschinger (*Pape et Empereur*). Daudet, *Le duc Decazes*. Welschinger, *Le roi de Rome*. Aubry, *Le roi de Rome*. Geoffroi de Grandmaison, *La Congrégation*. Geoffroi de Grandmaison, *Napoléon et les Cardinaux Noirs*. Chotard, *Pie VII à Savone*. Ricard, *Le Cardinal Maury*. Perceval, *Autour du comte Lainé*. Masson, *Napoléon et son fils*. Garnier, *Frayssinous*. Espitalier, *Napoléon et le roi Murat*.



## CHAPTER XL

### THE IMPERIAL MONUMENT

#### *The Council of 1811*

The Empire at its zenith. Paris the future capital of Europe. The 132 departments. The Prefects of Europe. The "French garden." Old France; the imperial world. The masses loyal. The state of tension. Uneasiness due to the conflict with the Pope; the Council aggravates it. The National Council; the independence of the "Fathers" disconcerts the Emperor. Incarcerated Bishops. The "Fathers" closeted until they sign. "The wine in bottle." Deputation sent to Savona. The Pope half inclined to give way. The Council dissolved. The clergy partially alienated. The imperial monument cracks on the approach of the storm.

**T**HE Empire, as I have already observed, was at its zenith. And for a few months profound peace seemed to reign within its borders. "The period between the end of 1810 and the middle of the year 1812," wrote Pasquier, "was the most peaceful we had enjoyed since the Consulate."

But they were halcyon days. For at home discontent was growing and abroad preparations were being made for the war, which, to use Talleyrand's expression, was to be "the beginning of the end." It was a magnificent monument but it was full of cracks; true, they were as yet too small to be seen by the vast majority of those who gazed upon it.

This monument, which had sprung up like a mushroom in the night, was top-heavy. After the recent annexation of the Spanish

**A Top-heavy Structure.** provinces and the Hanseatic towns, France, with her 132 departments, stretched from the Ebro to the Elbe, while the addition of Holland and the Roman

States extended her frontiers to the Zuider Zee and the Garigliano. In Europe, out of a population of 167 millions, Napoleon was the direct ruler of 44. And this constituted merely the body of the structure; it had wings and annexes. In fact, the Grand Empire stretched, in theory, from the Straits of Gibraltar (Joseph, King of Spain) to the Vistula (the Grand Duchy of Warsaw), the west

## THE IMPERIAL MONUMENT

coast of the Balkans as far as Zara (the Illyrian Provinces), and the Straits of Messina (the Kingdom of Naples). And for the Emperor, this merely constituted a beginning; it seemed, indeed, as though he were already dreaming of the United States of Europe under his hegemony. Paris, the capital of the Empire, he destined, before ten years had passed, to become the capital of Europe. The Pope was to be installed in the Île de la Cité. And when he ordered his architects, Percier and Fontaine, to build the King of Rome's Palace, the foundations of which were already beginning

**Paris to be  
the Capital of  
Europe.**

to rise out of the ground at Chaillot, opposite the Champ de Mars, he wrote: "Conditions are such that twelve Kings may find themselves there at the same time." He had also in mind the erection of another palace on the Champ de Mars itself in which, in addition to the archives of France, the Vatican and Spain, which were already piled up in the Hôtel de Soubise, those of the late Holy Empire were also to be housed, "which would duly complete this huge European collection." The Arc de Triomphe, which was being built in the centre of the Place de l'Étoile, was designed on a scale befitting the dream city that Paris was to become as the capital of Christendom. The *Code Napoléon* was in force, or supposed to be in force, throughout half Europe. The French *Cour de Cassation*, to which Italian, Dutch and German lawyers were summoned, dealt with cases that had been heard on the banks of the Elbe and the Tiber. The Court of the Tuileries and the Assemblies were open alike to the representatives of Rome, Amsterdam and Hamburg. The Emperor's aim in the early days had been to revive the Roman Empire, but this had already been far surpassed. It was an Empire on a much vaster scale that the last year had brought into being.

The "united departments," thanks to the choice of young, active, and enthusiastic Prefects, partly trained in the Council of State, enjoyed the benefits of a remarkable administration, which with truly marvellous felicity continued to rule what was already beginning to be known as "Old France," the France whose natural frontiers were the lines Brussels-Cologne and Mayence-Geneva. And now behold it was spreading over half Europe! I have no space in the present volume to follow these excellent administrators—as I shall one day do in detail—through their

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

respective departments, each one so strangely different from the rest. I should have no difficulty in vindicating this epithet of "excellent" by means of facts galore, which it would take too long to adduce now, and describing the example of hard work and activity set them by the man placed at their head—Montalivet, who, appointed Minister of the Interior in 1809, saw his task

**The Prefects of Europe.** grow with the Empire while his own zeal and industry appeared to know no limits. However much the idea of sending these French officials to

the banks of the Elbe or the Tiber, or a score of other places, may be condemned, it certainly cannot be denied that in the space of a few years they performed miracles. Napoleonic Europe, like Paris, was a huge workshop; roads were built across the Alps or running along the banks of the Rhine, canals were dug, ports were enlarged, and monuments were raised. Once when I was in Rome I saw work which had been carried out in four years by a Prefect of thirty; it had been planned for the last three

**End of the Feudal System.** hundred years and always postponed. Everywhere the old feudal system had made place for the modern régime—an out-worn world had crumbled to bits before the spirit of the Revolution. Napoleon, who was regarded as a despot, had established everywhere the rule of the Rights of Man, of Equality before the Law and of Civil Liberty. The Rhineland, annexed in 1800, seemed already to be so entirely permeated by this spirit that, to judge by contemporary accounts, she had become as "French" as Alsace or Lorraine, and the Emperor predicted that before twenty years had passed the same would be true of all the countries he had actually annexed or for whose annexation he was preparing by confiding them to the government of his chosen representatives. The day will come, I hope, when I shall be able to take these countries one by one and describe the benefits heaped upon them during these few short years.\*

\* I must offer a general apology to the reader for relegating the description of this Empire of 1811 to a much larger work on the Consulate and the Empire. The comparatively small compass of the present two volumes gives me no room to describe, even briefly as I should like to have done, not only Napoleonic Europe, but also the Court of the Tuileries, Society under the Empire, Art and Letters, the General Staff and the Army. These chapters, which have already been written, will find their place in the far more detailed work which I am preparing on the history of the Consulate and the Empire. Until it appears, I beg leave to refer the reader to a little book I published in 1926 entitled *La France de L'Empire*.

## THE IMPERIAL MONUMENT

The drawback—and danger—of this system lay in that imposition of uniformity which trammels nature and conflicts with national customs and temperaments. "The old fashion of trimming

### **A French Garden.**

the trees in a French garden," wrote the German Perthes ironically in 1811, "is now to be turned to cutting men to pattern; Indians and Persians, Turks and New Zealanders are also to be given Prefects and sub-Prefects, the Code and the Censorship." And the peoples resigned themselves with a bad grace to being shut up in the brazen mould created by Bonaparte for France of the year VIII; they felt ill at ease inside it, some of them were actually chafed. "They will get used to it," declared the Emperor. But even so the Master required time; for time is an obliging creature. Meanwhile, the Empire, a strangely heterogeneous structure, was still far from being firmly set on its foundations. The wings of this huge mushroom growth threatened to collapse at the first onslaught and, in so doing, to bring down the main body of the edifice as well.

The main body of the edifice, however, Old France, seemed to stand firm as a rock. As, indeed, she did; though

### **Old France.**

even on these less hastily constructed walls, unfriendly eyes espied cracks appearing. True, they were as yet but faint. The Emperor, at the head of an administration that had never been equalled, carried on the Government with none to oppose him. All the hostile parties were apparently crushed—the idea of a Republic had become inconceivable; seventy-five per cent of the Royalists had rallied to the Empire; the Bourbons had been worse than forsaken—they were unknown. The Assemblies, both Senate and Legislative Body, were at the

### **The Imperial World.**

Emperor's feet and, by their votes, blindly sanctioned every Government measure. But, as the witty Andrieux once observed to the First Consul, "One can lean only on that which offers resistance," and in the evanescence of all opposition perhaps lay one of the greatest dangers.

Another was the passing of the men of the Revolution who had proved of such invaluable service to the Emperor. "The men of the Revolution are growing old," he observed in tones not untinged with regret. True, they were growing old, but, worse still,

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they were taking less interest in a régime which, as I have pointed out, seemed to have developed contrary to their taste. In February, 1814, Réal, who was one of them, declared it was a great pity that by alienating some and discouraging others, the Government found itself deprived of men of force and energy who, to use Napoleon's own expression, had been "tempered in the waters of the Revolution." Seventy-five per cent of the men of the Right had whole-heartedly rallied to the Empire, but, as I have already observed, it was impossible for them, if ever a grave crisis arose, to show the devotion which, on the establishment of the Consulate, the fear of a return of the Bourbons had imposed upon the revolutionaries.

Nevertheless, the greatest danger did not lie in this direction. It was much more widespread and was due to the lassitude that had overtaken the great servants of the régime, Ministers, Marshals and high officials alike. In this connection, too, I should like to let my pen run on, and hope to do so one of these days, when I shall advance a hundred and one proofs to show that, ever since 1809, the imperial world, like Napoleon himself, had been passing through an acute psychological crisis. Everybody still admired and many still loved the Emperor, but few now gave him their unreserved approval and followed him without hesitation. They trembled for him, afraid that Fortune was turning his head—"to the point of madness," some were already whispering—and afraid also that Fortune, like themselves, was beginning to grow weary. The majority, feeling themselves bound up with his fate, secretly bore him a grudge for having, by his recklessness, compromised their interests which he had hitherto served so well. But dis-

### **A State of Tension.**

### **The Fallen Ministers.**

approval, even without opposition, amounts to hostility. Moreover, the great fallen Ministers, Talleyrand, shut up in his own house, and Fouché, now once more in Paris, were exploiting these sentiments, encouraging the murmurs and fanning the smouldering fires of fear. All opposition was dead, but intrigues, ten times more dangerous, were being hatched. In Paris public opinion was not in a healthy state; the Bourse was against the Emperor; even the bourgeoisie, the very class which, more than any other, had

## THE IMPERIAL MONUMENT

benefited from the régime, was becoming disaffected and bitter.

\* \* \* \* \*

Truth to tell, the mass of the people remained loyal, and more than loyal; in fact, to the very end, the peasants and the working classes adored the Emperor. In the provinces, no doubt, conscription was held in detestation; in fact, it would be quite legitimate to maintain that in 1811 it was regarded with horror. Peasants still remained profoundly grateful to the Master for having consolidated the results of the Revolution. He had secured the purchasers of the public land in their holdings, he had established religious peace and done everything possible to encourage agriculture, with the result that when industry went through a most critical period in 1811 and commerce languished, this branch of the national life remained extraordinarily prosperous. As for the working classes, they knew that it was the Emperor's constant endeavour, as far as possible, to prevent any stoppage of work and to secure them their daily bread. They "idolised" the Great Man—the word is used even by the most hostile writers—and, more susceptible than any other class in the country to an appeal to "glory," they never ceased to acclaim his victories. Furthermore, since the peasantry and the working classes all had sons or brothers in the army, they readily shared the attitude of the rank and file as a whole towards the "Tondu," the "Little Corporal," the "soldier's man." They might grumble, but they loved him. France, though ever anxious for peace, was extremely susceptible to the appeal of glory, and if occasionally in 1811 she seemed to be somewhat tired even of glory, it only required another great victory for cottage and attic to ring once more with shouts of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" which at that time were not mere mechanical official acclamations.

In this connection I am forced to be extremely brief. One day it will be interesting to give chapter and verse for what I can now merely state—that the masses loved the Emperor as much as they admired him and, in any case, could no longer conceive of any other Government, any other régime than his.

None the less, there is no denying that there were times when the abuse of conscription alienated public opinion, while the industrial

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crisis resulting from the over-production due to prosperity alarmed the manufacturers and made them disaffected. This crisis, involving a collapse of business, increased the hostility of financiers, always far from friendly, and since the Emperor could only promise the merchants better times as soon as England gave in, they too became extremely embittered. In fact, in 1811 there were a far larger number of malcontents than there had been in 1807 or even in 1809. The Blockade gave rise to great inconvenience; it raised the cost of living and weighed heavily round the necks of all. The constant repetition that England would capitulate within six months led people to despair of her ever doing so and an atmosphere of gloom was spread. France, it must be acknowledged, was tired, not of the Emperor nor even of his political policy, but of the intolerable situation created by the conflict with England and its consequences—endless wars, a perpetual state of siege and the constant tension of mind and spirit. The spring, too long bent, was losing its resilience.

\* \* \* \* \*

To all this must be added the uneasiness due to the conflict in which the Emperor was still engaged with the Pope. For, in spite of all the trouble the Master had taken to prevent this political quarrel from developing into a religious crisis, it was fast becoming so. In fact, it became nothing less when, after vain attempts to induce the Pope to give way, Napoleon convened the National Council.

Here it becomes necessary to go more minutely into detail.

The Emperor believed he could rely on *his* episcopate. But the majority of the French Bishops, as I have already pointed out, were still fundamentally loyal to the Chair of St. Peter, and Abbé Émery had merely expressed the general sentiment when, in 1809, he had dared to tell the Emperor that "the Head of the Church, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Pope, had the right to demand absolute obedience of all Christians, much more, therefore, of the body of the Church, since a body could not live without its head." As a matter of fact, Napoleon did not actually ask

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them to cast their weight on his side in the dispute. After his brutal seizure, the Pope, as we know, had recourse to the force of inertia and refused to invest the Bishops nominated by the Emperor. But since the Concordat left the latter quite helpless to face such a contingency, he merely wished the Bishops to provide him with a weapon. If the Pope refused to exercise his right of institution, all he wished them to do was, on their own authority, to transfer this right to the Metropolitan and thus remedy the defect in the Concordat—and the Canons. But in this he was demanding more than *his* Bishops, sitting in conclave, dared to concede. Confronted by each other in an assembly, men who were personally devoted to the Emperor, and capable of showing the utmost compliance, would have blushed at the thought of sacrificing a right so long vested in the Chair of St. Peter, not to mention deserting the cause of a persecuted old man.

Herein lay the risk, and the Emperor himself was aware of it. As we know, he had agreed to certain Bishops, whom he regarded as devoted to him, setting out for Savona, on the 3rd of May, with the object of making a further attempt to overcome the opposition of the "saintly mule." But Pius VII, after lengthy discussions, had confined himself to listening, without raising any objections, to the reading of a note expressing the desired conclusions. He had not signed it, and this scrap of paper, which carried no real authority, was all that the prelates brought back with them to Paris. The failure of this manœuvre, which soon became public property, made an extremely bad impression on the episcopal conclave.

Furthermore, the "Fathers" of the Council arrived in Paris in a frame of mind which led Savary's police, who soon saw how the land lay, to augur ill of the whole proceeding. Some of these learned divines, like the pious Bishop Miollis, regarded this conflict between the Emperor and the Pope as "the work of Satan," while others were chiefly impressed by the attitude of

the clergy; for the latter were even more displeased than the episcopate. The Emperor had made his uncle, Cardinal Fesch, President of the Council. But the Cardinal, in addition to being as obstructive as the rest of the Bonaparte family, was tormented by legitimate scruples, and consequently but little inclined to act cat's-paw to

**Mission to  
Savona.**

**The Council  
Meets.**



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

his nephew in the Assembly. To make matters worse, for the last two years Napoleon had been exasperated beyond endurance by these "priestly dissensions," and was not at all inclined to behave diplomatically. He instructed his Minister of Public Worship to read the "Fathers" an extremely violent discourse, which Fesch had in vain endeavoured to amend, and, on the 16th, the day before the Council held its first sitting, he opened the session of the Legislative Body in person and made such a scathing speech on "religious affairs" that the most pachydermatous Bishop might well have taken offence.

The Council accordingly met, on the 17th of June, in Notre-Dame—96 out of the 149 prelates who had been summoned. Boulogne, Bishop of Troyes, who was still regarded, quite erroneously,—as being devoted to Napoleon, having, in an atmosphere of tense excitement, preached a sermon on the loyalty due from the

**The Emperor Disappointed.** Bishops to the Pope, "without which the Episcopate would destroy itself and merely wither away like a rotten branch." It was noticed that Fesch, for his part, seemed intent on making each of the 95 prelates swear the oath of fealty to the Pope in as loud a voice as possible. Thus those who attended this first sitting in Notre-Dame carried away an impression very different from the one the Emperor had intended to produce; on receiving his uncle, Napoleon angrily denounced the spirit revealed by the Episcopate at the inaugural meeting. "I am not Louis the Debonair," he repeated several times; "I am Charlemagne."

On the 20th the Minister of Public Worship presented himself to read the speech that had been prepared (it was a mistake on the part of the Emperor to have entrusted its composition to the ex-Oratorian Daunou, a notorious enemy of the Roman Church). It gave rise to great offence, and at the expression "administration of the Council" there was a violent outcry. The Assembly then turned to the question of the address to be presented to the Emperor, and extremely acrimonious discussions took place in the Commission entrusted with the task of drawing it up. When a draft was eventually produced, deploring the Pope's misfortunes, the Bishops of Munster and Cambrai made an eloquent appeal, suggesting that they should go to the Emperor in a body and beg him to have the Holy Father set at liberty. "We owe it

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to our office," exclaimed the Bishop of Cambrai; "we owe it to our dioceses; we owe it to all the Catholics of the Empire and of Europe." Fesch had some difficulty in preventing this dangerous

manœuvre, but the cheers with which the proposal had been greeted were sufficiently eloquent. When the question of the Council's competence was brought up for discussion, the Commission, composed chiefly of prelates who had just revealed their hostility, showed but little inclination to meet the Emperor's wishes;—the Council, it declared, could not modify the method of canonical institution in any way without the Pope's consent.

What was most calculated to irritate the Emperor was the fact that public opinion, as the police themselves were forced to acknowledge, supported his opponents in the Council. In an Empire where every tongue had been silenced the voices raised in Notre-Dame rang out with unexpected clarity, and people were pleased. Napoleon, however, declared that his Council "was developing into a Club." And when he granted audience to two prelates, whom he quite rightly regarded as being whole-heartedly devoted to him, the French Archbishops of Turin and Florence, he let himself go and wound up by declaring that he had done with the Concordat! On d'Osmond, Archbishop of Florence, replying that "he would be tearing up one of the most glorious pages in his history," he gave way on this point only to declare that "fear of the Pope" had turned the prelates of the Council into so many "cowards." The taunt cut the two men to the quick, and d'Osmond, drawing himself up, retorted: "Cowards! No, sire! since they are supporting the weaker party!" And thus the Emperor threw even his friends into the arms of the opposition.

The Commission entrusted with the task of deciding the question of competency eventually came to the conclusion that the paper brought back from Savona was null and void, and declared that the Council could not hold any deliberations until it had sent its own deputation to Savona to find out the Holy

Father's real sentiments. And after debates, in which Boulogne of Troyes, Broglie of Ghent, and Hirn of Tournai played a particularly prominent part, it decided to adhere to this resolve. The Emperor, exasper-

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ated beyond endurance, immediately signed a decree of dissolution and had the three prelates, who had made themselves most conspicuous for their opposition, summarily arrested and sent to Vincennes, where he allowed them to remain until they had sent in their resignations.

This "execution" put the fear of God into the Council, though not to the extent of inspiring any hope that it would, as a body, reject the proposals of its Commission. Cambacérès, ever fertile in finding expedients, suggested a solution. The Council was not to meet again, but each of the prelates was to be summoned separately before the Minister of Public Worship and asked to express his opinion. "Our wine did not taste good from the wood," observed Cardinal Maury, with his usual flippancy; "it will be better in bottle." And indeed, the unfortunate clerics found their courage wavering; they could not help thinking of Vincennes! They were called upon to declare the Council competent to settle the question of canonical institution, but only in the event of a further deputation sent to the Pope failing to obtain a satisfactory solution from the Pontiff himself. The majority resigned themselves to approving the note presented to each in turn. Whereupon the Minister of Public Worship collected them all together and informed them that the Council had again come into existence. On the 5th of August, Fesch having called another meeting, the Bishops, unable to disavow their previous consent, dejectedly voted in favour of the decree that had been forced upon them, and declared themselves competent to legislate on the question of the institutions. The spirited protest of d'Aviaux, Archbishop of Bordeaux, however, was given a respectful hearing, and there were 13 votes against. The Assembly then adjourned to await the return of the prelates sent as delegates to Savona.

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At first Pius VII, who for two months had been bombarded with the most pressing solicitations, seemed as though he were going to give way. He gave his consent to the amendment of the Concordat. The Holy See was to be given twelve months in which to institute the Bishops nominated by the French Government. After the lapse of that period, the Metropolitan was to

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be "authorised" to institute them but only "in the name of the Pope." In order to emphasise the nature of the incidents in Notre-Dame, however, Pius VII declared that he had given way only out of regard for the "filial submission and true obedience" that the Council had shown "to the Roman Church, the mother and mistress of all the others."

**The Pope  
Inclined to  
Yield.**

The deputies returned to Paris shouting victory, and the Emperor sent the Fathers of the Council to them. But the terms used by Pius VII did not please him and he accordingly had the document rejected by the Council of State as being contrary to "Gallican liberties." It was sent back to the Pope for correction. This was summarily refused in a stiff note, the tone of which took everybody by surprise. In January, 1812, further lengthy negotiations were opened on the subject and also ended

**The Pope  
Moved to  
Fontainebleau.**

in failure. Once more the Emperor lost his temper, and stormed and raved. But under this hail of abuse and threats Pius VII again took refuge in passive resistance, with the result that Napoleon ordered him to be moved to Fontainebleau, where he undertook to deal with him personally.

As a matter of fact, the Emperor had just lost an important battle. The calling of the Council had been a serious step of much graver consequence than he imagined. The prelates had left Paris in a frame of mind far from favourable to the man they had hitherto served so well; they were proud of having been the only section of the community to hold their heads up, even for one brief moment, and resist him, but were mortified at having

**Attitude of  
the Bishops.**

been obliged to cede to his threats. Last, but not least, they were hurt by the treatment meted out to their imprisoned colleagues, though none the less convinced that the Episcopate still represented a force to be reckoned with in the prostrate country.

The feeling uppermost in their minds was that they had been confronted by a despotism which they now regarded as odious. As I have already observed, it was respect for the man who had "restored the altars" that had induced them to support the imperial régime apart from the principles on which it was founded—those of the detested Revolution. And now this very man had

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just dealt most of them a terrible blow. Frédéric Masson, however, is guilty of gross exaggeration in declaring that "from that moment they were thrown back into the arms of the Royalists." At the beginning of 1813, matters had not yet reached such a pass. All the same, it cannot be denied that, in the event of a crisis arising, they were far less inclined in 1812 than they had been in 1810 to look askance at the prospect of a change of régime. Their Catholic followers had not yet broken away, but their ardour was cooling. And this, unfortunately, meant a further extremely important addition to those elements which, as we have already seen, were helping to undermine public opinion on the eve of an epoch-making crisis.

And this crisis was at hand! It was to be the result of an altogether unforeseen catastrophe—the only force capable of shaking and eventually overthrowing the magnificent imperial edifice raised during these eight short years, which seemed an eternity.

### The Approach of the Storm.

SOURCES. *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XVIII to XXII). Lecestre, *Lettres inédites* (II). Memoirs and Reminiscences by Pasquier (I), Madame de Rémusat, (III), Cardinal Consalvi (II). Baron de Trémont, Dr Poumiès de la Siboutie, Barante (I), General Thiébaut (IV), d'Azeglio, Thibaudeau, La Tour du Pin, Baron de Plancy, and Savary. Marquiset, *Napoléon sténographié au Conseil d'État*. Le Coz, *Correspondance* (II).

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# THE DECLINE OF THE EMPIRE

## CHAPTER XLI

### ON THE THRESHOLD OF WAR

The Emperor does not wish for war. He believes that the Tsar desires the Grand Duchy for the Duke of Oldenburg, and is irritated. Maret as Foreign Minister. The Tsar pretends he does not wish to break off relations, but makes his own preparations for war. He again allows British ships to enter Russia. The Emperor, displeased by this, terrifies the life out of Kurakin. He "sounds" Prussia, Sweden, Turkey and Austria. Prussia forced to accept alliance with France; Sweden and Turkey manage to evade it; Austria negotiates on equal terms. Napoleon calls upon the Tsar to explain himself. March of the French armies across Germany. Metternich assures the Tsar of his friendship. Napoleon seizes Pomerania; Bernadotte treats with Alexander. Napoleon makes Joseph Commander-in-Chief of the French forces in Spain. The Tsar demands the evacuation of Germany and goes to Vilna. Narbonne sent to Vilna. Napoleon in Dresden; another "*parterre* of Kings;" the two churches. The Emperor goes to Thorn. The alternative routes. The huge army; its shortcomings. Crossing of the Niemen.

**T**HE great crisis was at hand; it was destined to arise out of the war with Russia, which had now become inevitable.

Inevitable! In March, 1811, Napoleon did not as yet believe it, though he certainly feared it. Frankly, it was the last thing in the world he desired; nay more, he still hoped to prevent it. On the 5th of April he wrote two letters to Champagny in which he declared, in all sincerity, that he would not make war on Russia either "for Poland," or for "the customs tariff," but solely in the event of the Tsar disregarding the terms of the Treaty of Tilsit and "making peace with England."

**The Tsar's  
Duplicity.**

He was not aware that, at the very moment of writing, his official "ally" was conducting in Poland, Vienna, Berlin, and Stockholm a secret campaign for securing support both in men and money against France. But the movement of Russian troops, though it may have escaped the notice of the French Ambassador, no longer remained a secret from the Emperor, and, as usual, he was determined to forestall an offensive

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

by taking the first step himself, and before a single Cossack had crossed the Niemen, being in a position to place his army in battle array on the bank of that river. Having done so, he would demand a final explanation from the Tsar which might possibly lead to an agreement.

But for this he still required many long months of preparation, which were also necessary for weaving a network of alliances round Russia. He made up his mind to prepare the ground in Berlin, Stockholm and Constantinople, and accordingly offered Metternich the alliance the latter had craved a short while previously; allowed Frederick William, in return for his support,

to hope for some alleviation of the burdens under which he had been groaning since the defeat of Jena; instructed his representative in Sweden at length to humour Bernadotte's vanity, and

**Napoleon's Diplomatic Campaign.** sent Latour-Maubourg to the Bosphorus for the purpose of renewing with the Porte the bonds severed by Tilsit. In order to bring this colossal diplomatic campaign to a successful issue considerable delay was necessary. And it was for this reason that he pretended to be taken in by the sentimental protestations of the Tsar. But, as he wished to be better informed in order to keep his own game dark, he sent his aide-de-camp, Lauriston, to take Caulaincourt's place in St. Petersburg. Lauriston left Paris on the 1st of April, 1811, bearing a letter in which the Emperor returned to the cordial tone of yore: "I shall be the first to disarm," he declared, "and replace everything on the footing that existed a year ago, provided Your Majesty is willing to return to a similar attitude of confidence."

Unfortunately, this letter crossed one written on the 25th of March by Alexander and entrusted to our old friend Tchernitcheff, who had become his right-hand man. This letter irritated Napoleon; but he was even more displeased by an injudicious hint let drop by Tchernitcheff himself; the Tsar, the latter ventured to suggest, would be satisfied if the dispossessed Duke of Oldenburg were given part of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. Napoleon immediately interpreted this as an attempt to filch *his* Poland from him and turn it into a domain for the Russian royal family. When despatches from Davout informed him of the Tsar's secret intrigues to lure the Poles of the Grand Duchy over to his side,

## ON THE THRESHOLD OF WAR

he held his tongue, but hastened his preparations. For three days he shut himself up in his own room and once more became the man he had been on the eve of all his great campaigns, meditating, planning, foreseeing everything, and thinking of everything. Nevertheless, he resolved to conduct his diplomatic campaign more energetically than ever. But, as he felt Champagny was not

**Maret made  
Foreign  
Minister.**

yet sufficiently under his thumb, he gave Maret, his blind devotee, the Foreign Office on the 17th of April, knowing that in him he would find the *alter ego* he now required in that position, and on the very next day dictated to him the programme of the diplomatic campaign he had already thought out. Prussia and Austria were to be closely bound to the policy of France by means of formal treaties, and were to provide contingents which, the moment hostilities broke out, would reinforce his invading armies; on the extreme wings, the support of Stockholm and Constantinople was to be secured, and, as soon as Russia had been vanquished, the recently conquered Danubian principalities, together with Finland and all that she still held of the old Kingdom of Poland, were to be taken from her. To bring all this to a successful issue might require months; but he had time.

The Tsar, for his part, also wished to gain time and accordingly continued to dissimulate. Lauriston, on his arrival in St. Peters-

**Lauriston  
Sent to  
St. Peters-  
burg.**

burg, was greeted with the same smiles as had won over Caulaincourt, and also immediately capitulated. "The Emperor Alexander," he wrote, after the first interview, "does not wish for war; he will fight only if he is attacked." This was confirmed by Caulaincourt on his return to Paris. He assured the Emperor that this was the case; unfortunately, he also assured a great many other people, and thus gave rise to the myth which, after the disaster of the following year, did Napoleon so much harm. The Emperor, too, for a moment, found his convictions shaken, and again hoped that everything might be amicably settled.

Alexander, moreover, pretended to be satisfied and continued to protest that he loved the Emperor of the French with all his heart and wished only for peace. Meanwhile, through Tchernitcheff, this "loving ally" had officials in the Ministry of War



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

bribed to reveal military facts and figures to his amiable representative, while Nesselrode, the Embassy Counsel, sedulously applied himself to conducting intrigues with high-placed malcontents and discovering all the secrets of the imperial Government. Furthermore, it was now perfectly plain to England that the Blockade was so hypocritically enforced by the Tsar that, as far as this important clause was concerned, the Treaty of Tilsit had become a dead letter in Russia. In this connection an incident occurred which, while it opened the eyes of the British Government, also enlightened the Emperor of the French.

### **Russian Spies in Paris.**

In the summer of 1811 the latter was informed that a regular English merchant fleet had again appeared in the waters of the Baltic, a convoy of 150 heavily laden vessels, and that the Russian ports had been opened to them. They had taken care to sail under neutral colours, but this could not possibly deceive anybody. This was a direct slap in the face for the Emperor, and he could not contain himself any longer. On the 15th of August, when he received the congratulations of the diplomatic corps on his birthday, he violently arraigned Kurakin, the Russian Ambassador, finally offering to sign an immediate treaty with the Tsar arranging everything.

### **English Ships in the Baltic.**

### **Scene with Kurakin.**

Had Kurakin authority to do this? He had not? Then let him demand it! The scene he made almost terrified Kurakin out of his wits. And sinking under the weight of his embroidered velvet Court dress, covered with medals, all the wretched man could do was to repeat, as though he were in a nightmare: "It is very hot in Your Majesty's apartments!"

It was indeed extremely hot! On the very next day Napoleon had the Russian dossier brought to him and in it discovered full confirmation of his conviction. It was perfectly clear that for

### **War Inevitable.**

at least a year the Tsar's sole aim had been war and that he was, above all, determined to wrest the Grand Duchy of Warsaw from the French Empire.

The conflict, with Poland as the stakes, now assumed definite shape in the Emperor's mind. And he was already fixing the spring of 1812 for the outbreak of hostilities.

## ON THE THRESHOLD OF WAR

He prepared for the struggle by means of negotiations now conducted with the utmost secrecy in the Chancelleries where the two adversaries had already been confronting one another. In Vienna, Metternich was delighted, though circumspect. He would have liked to remain neutral, but since a short while previously he had been so persistent in his offers of alliance, it would have been somewhat difficult for him to wriggle out of it.

Still less was it possible for Prussia to do so. She was at Napoleon's mercy and had no hope whatever of being able to avoid an alliance she detested. For the last three years, in spite of her plighted word, she had been surreptitiously getting together an army to be some day hurled against Napoleon. But the latter eventually surprised her in these secret preparations. The Prussian Government then endeavoured to renew relations with the Tsar and to induce Austria to break with the French. But as he did not receive the assurances he expected either from St. Petersburg or Vienna, the King of Prussia gave way. The Emperor then offered him his own conception of an alliance—in case of war with Russia, the Kingdom of Prussia was to be open to the passage of troops and was to furnish a contingent of 20,000 men who were to fight in the French ranks. Hardenberg protested in Paris that he would sign everything; the only favour he asked was that the contingent of 20,000 men should not be dispersed regiment by regiment in the corps of the new Grand Army, but should remain grouped under one Prussian General. Obviously the object of the request was to make defection easier in the event of matters turning out badly for the French. Napoleon was guilty of the imprudence of deigning to grant this "favour," and Prussia accordingly made up her mind. Austria, moreover, had made it perfectly clear to Scharnhorst, the Prussian envoy, that for the time being she was miles away from breaking with the formidable Emperor.

As for Bernadotte, he too backed out. As long as the Emperor refused to hand over Norway into his covetous grasp, he considered it beneath his dignity once more to become a mere lieutenant of Napoleon, and, in the presence of Alquier, he swore that rather than degrade himself by playing such a part "he would plunge a dagger into his breast, and throw himself head first into the

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

sea; or, better still, he would mount his horse on top of a barrel of gunpowder and blow himself up"—trotting out all the bombastic boasts of his native south to cover up his treacherous intentions. For he was sending emissaries to the Tsar to offer him his services—also in return for Norway. Moreover, the English and their merchandise were again entering Sweden.

**Bernadotte  
and the Tsar.**

From the quarter of Turkey the Emperor met with bitter disappointment. Though beaten by the Russians on the Danube, the Porte refused to seize the opportunity for revenge offered by Paris. Ever since Tilsit she had been filled with rancour against Napoleon, and preferred to resign herself to peace with Russia rather than trust to alliance with France.

**Turkey  
Obdurate.**

This rendered it all the more necessary for the Emperor to make sure of Austria. As a matter of fact, the latter pretended to be coy; she had no intention of allowing herself to be "enrolled" like the hapless Prussians. In the end an understanding was reached. As soon as war became inevitable, Austria, *in conjunction* with the French army, was to march an auxiliary corps, commanded by one of her own great Generals, against Russia. In return for this, Napoleon, as soon as the campaign was ended, was to give her back the Illyrian Provinces. True, this was merely to be by way of exchange for that part of Galicia which still remained in the hands of the Habsburgs, in case the Tsar made it necessary to restore the Kingdom of Poland. On the 5th of March, 1812, the King of Prussia, more dead than alive, made up his mind to ratify the treaty of alliance. But he wrote again to the Tsar:

**Alliance with  
Austria.**

**Prussia's  
Duplicity.**

"We shall do you only such damage as is forced upon us by the direst necessity, ever bearing in mind that we must one day again become allies." Such duplicity defies description. Thus Napoleon was perfectly right to provide himself with a formidable army; for swift victory alone could keep such allies true.

Davout, stationed in Hamburg, already had an "army corps" of over 100,000 men, the advance guard of which, together with a "garrison" raised to 25,000 men, was under Rapp, in Danzig.

## ON THE THRESHOLD OF WAR

The Germans of the Confederation were to furnish 125,000 men, while two other corps, Oudinot's in the Netherlands and Ney's between Boulogne and Mayence, both of which were every day swelled by further additions—ostensibly for confronting England—had only to wheel round in order to take their places in the Grand Army. In Italy, Eugene had a force of 80,000 men which he was holding in readiness, and in France a magnificent cavalry corps was being formed destined for King Murat, who would thus be torn away from Italian intrigues. All this was to be set in motion and slowly advanced through Germany in the direction of the Niemen. Perhaps Napoleon imagined it would be enough for the Tsar to see the approach of these invading hordes for him to lay down his arms at the eleventh hour before any fighting took place; such, at all events, was still apparently the hope that inspired him. For he was perfectly sincere when he repeatedly enquired of the representatives of the Tsar "what their master wanted," and expressed the hope that, after a frank explanation, France and Russia would be able to come to terms.

On the 25th of February he sent Tchernitcheff back to St. Petersburg with explicit suggestions for an understanding. Having been enlightened by the police regarding the activities of this "worthy young man," he felt that this mission would provide a good excuse of ridding Paris of the spy who had worked so well there. As soon as he had left, the treacherous official who had betrayed army secrets to Russia was arrested and paid for his disloyalty with his life.

Meanwhile, from Italy to the Netherlands, the masses of troops that had been made ready began slowly to move forward. On the 28th of February, General Headquarters, under Berthier, crossed the Rhine. The march was carried out with clockwork precision.

On the 14th of March, 1812, Austria signed her treaty. She was to furnish, on the right wing of the French armies, a body of 34,000 men under the command of Schwarzenberg. The choice of Schwarzenberg had been at Napoleon's express desire, for he regarded him as the Austrian General most devoted to France. Metternich,

**Napoleon's  
Forces.**

**Tchernitcheff  
Sent Back  
to Russia.**

**Metternich's  
Duplicity.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

better informed, relied on the General, when the time came, to support his own policy, which, as usual, was extraordinarily crafty and cunning. Lebzeltern was sent to St. Petersburg to assuage the wrath of the Tsar, who, on being informed of the alliance concluded with Napoleon, took the announcement extremely ill. The arguments used by Lebzeltern to calm him down were, to say the least, singular. On the 1st of June he followed the example of the King of Prussia, and openly assured Alexander that Austria would do him the least possible amount of harm. "We shall merely be auxiliaries," he declared, "and treat you as tenderly as Your Majesty treated us (in 1809)." Alexander understood. "Assure the Emperor of Austria," he replied, "that my friendly feelings for him remain unchanging. . . . In any case I promise not to give him the tiniest scratch." Such were the allies—Prussia and Austria—whom Napoleon was dragging in his wake.

Truth to tell, the Emperor only half trusted them, but he was counting on his first victories to confirm their allegiance. About the victories themselves he felt not the smallest doubt.

**Pomerania  
Seized.** He made one more attempt to win over Sweden and Turkey, but in vain. As Swedish Pomerania had suddenly thrown open her ports to English ships, he seized it, an act which proved the last straw for Bernadotte. The Turks, moreover, whom Tilsit had irrevocably alienated, refused to have anything whatever to do with Napoleon's designs; their one thought was to seize the opportunity to make peace on the best possible terms with the Tsar. Be this as it may, "those dogs of Turks," as Napoleon called them, were merely refusing the hand held out to them because, in 1807, it had been too hastily withdrawn.

Thus the Emperor was forced to do without the two allies whom he had hoped to see marching on the extreme left and the extreme right of his armies, positions now to be occupied by Prussia and Austria, who, as we have seen, were far from single-minded. But Napoleon cared little for all this; from Paris his eye followed with satisfaction the formidable advance of his armies across Germany—nine corps were marching abreast, 392 battalions and 347 squadrons, 397,343 men all told, the most colossal army which had ever been put in the field against any country and which,

## ON THE THRESHOLD OF WAR

moreover, would on its way be augmented by 20,000 Prussians and 34,000 Austrians. Before many days had passed, this mass would reach the Vistula, while the reserves, in their turn, under Victor and Augereau, would concentrate between the Elbe and the Oder, and a third mass, the conscripts of 1812, would be drilled on their march between the Rhine and the Elbe.

Napoleon still cherished the illusion that, on being warned, the Tsar would be seized with fear. And, indeed, Russia did actually feel the greatest alarm and there are signs to show that for a moment Alexander was intimidated and contemplated renewing the alliance. It was only the arrival of Lövenhielm, the Swedish envoy, that suddenly restored the ebbing courage of St. Petersburg. Bernadotte was offering his services! The man who but a

**Bernadotte  
Approaches  
the Tsar.**

short while previously had been a French Marshal was even suggesting renewing the bonds between Russia and England, which were still officially broken. In any case, he declared himself ready to attack the French on their flank with 35,000 Swedes provided they had been reinforced by a contingent of 20,000 Russians. Alexander, reassured, immediately sent his aide-de-camp, General von Suchterlen, to Stockholm, with instructions to strike while the iron was hot—he was ready to allow Bernadotte to lay his feverish grasp on Norway! And on the 5th of April the treaty was signed which gave Russia, hitherto isolated, a sense of security. Whereupon Alexander immediately threw off the mask,

**The Tsar's  
Ultimatum.**

and in the guise of a reply to the message confided to Tchernitcheff, sent an ultimatum to Paris, demanding the evacuation by Napoleon of the whole of Prussia and Swedish Pomerania and the surrender of all the strategic points occupied beyond the Elbe. As a matter of fact, he regarded his ultimatum as being so unacceptable, that it virtually amounted to a declaration of war. And on the 21st of April, 1812, he left St. Petersburg, together with his General Staff, and went to Vilna, where he determined to set up his Headquarters and await the French.

\* \* \* \* \*

Napoleon, meanwhile, was lingering in Paris. He was hoping to delay his departure until he had received news of a victory in

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Spain. For the last year, the god-forsaken Spanish business had continued to provide nothing but pain and mortification. To understand this it would be necessary once more to enter into the details of operations which were always on the point of succeeding and as often failing, owing either to the clumsy futility of King Joseph, or the mistakes of the High Command, or simply and solely to the lack of unity arising out of the jealousy among the leaders. Wellington, who, time and again, might have been defeated, had seized the opportunity to regain two strongholds,

### **Anarchy in Spain.**

Badajoz in the south and Ciudad Rodrigo in the north, which once more threw Spain open to him and even allowed him to choose his own ground according to circumstances. The conquest of the Kingdom of Valencia by Suchet, the only one of the great leaders who consistently met with success, did not change the position very much. Everything, from the Pyrenees to Andalusia, was anarchy, and Napoleon, who, for months past, had been preaching harmony, hoped at last to have settled everything by making Joseph

### **Joseph Commander- in-Chief.**

Commander-in-Chief in March 1812. The power was really passed on to his Chief of Staff, Marshal Jourdan, who had a force of 230,000 men—at least on paper—confided to his care. But at the very moment when Wellington had apparently made up his mind to break Marmont's lines in the north, the leaders continued to fight and squabble among themselves, agreeing only on one point—their determination to avoid acknowledging the authority delegated to Joseph. Napoleon, however, was still counting on a success; in any case, the catastrophe which was shortly to occur on the other side of the Pyrenees never for one moment entered into his calculations. He believed that men like Soult, one of his best lieutenants, and Marmont, in whom he had complete confidence, would find their feet again, and that now unity of command had been secured, victory would result. All the same the thought of moving thousands of miles away from the Pyrenees filled him with vague foreboding. The whole business was a

### **The Spanish Nightmare.**

torture to him, and he made up his mind that as soon as Russia had been settled he would also have done with Spain, even if, after having driven Wellington into the sea, he were obliged to return to Ferdinand

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VII the god-forsaken country which had poisoned the last four years of his reign.

On the 25th of April the Emperor received the Tsar's ultimatum, which was presented to him by the terrified Kurakin. The unfortunate Ambassador had to meet another hurricane of abuse on the following day. "You are behaving like Prussia did before the battle of Jena," exclaimed the Emperor. "She, too, demanded the evacuation of Germany!" He was really more annoyed than angry, the uncompromising nature of the ultimatum seemed to show that Alexander had reached an important decision. Was he going to hurl himself on Poland and Germany before the French armies had crossed the Vistula? And he decided to send Narbonne to him at Vilna to make "one last effort for peace." On the 9th of

### **Napoleon Leaves Paris.**

May the Emperor himself left Paris accompanied by the Empress and part of the Court. The *Moniteur* announced that the "Empress would accompany His Majesty as far as Dresden, where she hoped to have the pleasure of seeing her august family." By a strange coincidence, the same number of the *Moniteur* also contained an article entitled: "Researches carried out in the district where Varus and his legions perished."

Thus the legions reached the Vistula. Though they seemed to be Cæsar's they were really the legions of Varus.

Meanwhile the imperial couple were making their way to Dresden, which they entered with great pomp and ceremony on the 17th. All the German Princes immediately flocked thither

### **Festivities at Dresden.**

and the Emperor was once more surrounded by the *parterre* of Erfurt, *minus* the Tsar, whose place was taken by the Habsburgs. And, once again, as the scoffer had remarked on the previous occasion, the *parterre* was a *plate-bande*. The Emperor and Empress of Austria arrived on the following day, and, in spite of her ferocious hatred of "Bonaparte," the Empress Maria Ludovica also accompanied them. And yet that insatiable "Bonaparte" was not satisfied because the Crown Prince had not come too; Maria Ludovica's excuse was that he was only sixteen and extremely shy. "Only hand him over to me for a year," retorted Napoleon, "and I'll polish him up, you'll see!" He treated all these Princes with scant ceremony.



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Moreover, all of them, especially his hosts, the Saxon Princes, flattered and fawned upon him to a ridiculous and exaggerated degree. One evening there were fireworks and the sky was lit up by a magnificent set-piece representing the sun, with the motto: "Less great and less beautiful than him!" He shrugged his shoulders. "They must indeed think me a fool!" he exclaimed.

He did not allow himself to be absorbed in the festivities, however, but despatched his orders from Dresden at all hours of the day and night, and thus directed the advance of the troops from the Vistula to the Niemen.

On the 24th the King of Prussia arrived. Extremely pained by the attitude forced upon him, he came, as usual, looking extremely gloomy. "He is a bore!" the Emperor had declared at Tilsit. But he was agreeably surprised by the reception Napoleon gave him; it was so cordial that he felt reassured, and sent for the young Crown Prince from Berlin. And for once the Prussians also joined in the chorus of adulation that arose from the *parterre*.

**Adulation  
of the  
Princes.**

At that moment these Princes all felt that there really was an Emperor of Europe. But Napoleon did not show any signs of having had his head turned, though when he went for a ride outside Dresden the Saxon peasants crowded round him and gazed up at him as though he were a god. Did he have a presentiment that it was too much, that in the end Heaven would take offence? One day when he was out riding in this way he dismounted from his horse and went alone into a church where he remained for some time. Almost at the same moment, in a far-away village

**The Two  
Emperors at  
Prayer.**

in Lithuania, a priest, who was celebrating Mass, turned round and saw a Russian officer absorbed in prayer. It was the Tsar Alexander! More than a thousand miles away from each other, each of the two Emperors, on the eve of coming to grips, must have obeyed the same impulse—to win over to his own cause Him whom, throughout the ages, men have always called the "Almighty."

The days passed by—too many of them, for the Emperor was losing precious hours. As a matter of fact, his orders followed close on the heels of his 300,000 men. He had to hurry, for time was not on his side. While those "dogs of Turks" were entering

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into negotiations for peace with Russia, Bernadotte, whom at one moment he had hoped to win back, had once and for all eluded his grasp. Not content with promising the Tsar his help, he gave

**Bernadotte's Advice.** him advice with regard to the opening campaign which, coming from so experienced a French General, was invaluable. "Avoid great battles,"

he said. "Harass the enemy by means of marches and counter-marches which the French soldier finds more trying than anything and gives his adversary the greatest hold over him."—"I see now," wrote an elated English agent, "that he is not like other Frenchmen."—All honour to the other Frenchmen!

On the 29th of May—at last!—the Emperor made up his mind to leave Dresden. He went first to Posen and then to Thorn. Narbonne, whom he found at Posen, had returned from Vilna convinced that, even in defeat, the Tsar would not readily come to terms. But every day Alexander grew more confident of victory.

**Treaty of Bucharest.** Bernadotte had signed the alliance, and on the 28th of May the Turks had concluded the preliminaries of the Treaty of Bucharest. Russia, making an enormous sacrifice to obtain this peace, was restoring to the vanquished Turks the two provinces she had wrested from them, with the exception of Bessarabia, thus proving that the Tsar now had but one object at heart—the defeat of Napoleon.

Meanwhile, the latter was making his final arrangements at Thorn. Of the four great roads crossing the Russian Empire, he rejected the one leading to St. Petersburg and determined to make for Moscow, or rather, towards that part of Russia, between the sources of the Dnieper and the Dvina, which forms the threshold, the gate of that colossal Empire. This was the point of junction—and an extremely bad one—between the two great Russian armies, under Barclay de Tolly and Bragation, the one on the right and the other on the left of the enemy. The Emperor felt that this was a weak spot, as, indeed, was the case. As soon as Vilna had been occupied, it was here that he would strike his blow, and driving Bragation back on the right and Barclay on the left, he would demolish each in turn. He intended to make his way to this Vitebsk region by the central routes, the one passing through Grodno and Minsk and the other through Kovno and Vilna. The

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

arrangements for the crossing of the Niemen had been based on this plan of action.

The Emperor remained at Thorn for some days. He held reviews and found the army full of enthusiasm, which filled him with delight. One day the officers on duty heard him singing the *Chant du Départ* at the top of his voice:

*Tremble, ye foes of France!*

The first to benefit by the Emperor's good humour was Murat, whom he received at Danzig, where a somewhat acrimonious interview took place. But in the end Napoleon fell on his neck and kissed him. In his heart of hearts he was glad to have his old cavalry leader back again. But Murat, though still a brave soldier, had, even from the military point of view, sadly deteriorated. By a gross piece of carelessness he was destined to lose part of the huge imperial cavalry force, and after having thus compromised the campaign at the start, the day came when, as we shall see, he turned discomfiture into a disaster.

Moreover, the apparently formidable army which was to cross the Niemen was marred by more than one defect. Consisting, for the most part, of men who were strangers to Old France, and belonged to a dozen different peoples and races, it was a regular army of Babel in which nobody could understand his neighbour. It was impossible for national feeling, which had been responsible for so many French victories, to be paramount in this hotch-potch. Moreover, although the leaders were nearly all extremely fine soldiers, they were suffering from the secret malady which, ever since 1809, had been eating into the vitals of the General Staff—they had lost some of their military virtues and, having acquired great possessions, were entering the campaign with a sigh of regret for all they were leaving behind. Worse still, like their colleagues in Spain, they were divided against themselves by jealousies which sometimes amounted to hatred. Lastly, one and all were doomed to be overwhelmed by the very vastness of the enterprise. Though the Emperor's preparations had been marvellous, this formidable army was bound to remain too

## ON THE THRESHOLD OF WAR

cumbersome a machine; its works were too intricate and difficult to manipulate without jarring and accidents. The very first encounter seemed to put it out of gear. And the **Napoleon's Deterioration.** Emperor himself, the "great motive power," was no longer the man he had been at Austerlitz or even at Wagram. Though still magnificent in his energy, he too now had his weaknesses, having for some months been subject to sudden attacks of physical collapse which entailed moral lapses.

So magnificent, however, was the spectacle presented by the army as it advanced towards the river that its great leader, **A Magnificent Spectacle.** looking down on it from a height, might well have felt confident. It took two days for it to march past. On the 24th he himself crossed the river. "If Russia gives way," wrote Roger de Damas, on the 1st of July, "Napoleon will have won his cause without any possibility of appeal." The whole of Europe was quivering with anxiety.

**SOURCES.** *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XXII). Bailleu, the collection already mentioned. Lecestre, *Lettres inédites* (II). Méjean, *Lettres*. (*Miscellanea Napoleonica*). Madame de Staël, *Dix ans d'exil*. Memoirs or Reminiscences by Metternich, Roger de Damas, Civrieux, and Villemain (*Souvenirs contemporains*, I). Nesselrode, *Lettres*.

**WORKS.** Those already mentioned by Vandal (III), Sorel (VII), Driault (III), Pringaud (*Bernadotte*), Masson (*Famille*, VII), Morvan (*Soldat*, II), and the Grand Duke Nicholas (*Alexandre*, I).

## CHAPTER XLII

### THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

Russia's plans. The French army at Vilna. The Russian retreat; Bagration on the point of being crushed; he is saved by Jerome's mistakes. The Tsar makes peace with the Turks. Napoleon faces Barclay opposite the camp at Drissa; Barclay escapes. The march on Smolensk. The wings advance. The Russians escape from Smolensk also. The march on Moscow decided upon. The interview between the Tsar and Bernadotte at Åbo. The Russians decide to defend Moscow; Kutusoff Commander-in-Chief. The battle of Borodino or the Moskva. A sanguinary and hotly contested fight; the Russians are decimated and beat a retreat. Entry into Moscow; the burning of the city; offers of peace to the Tsar receive no reply. The Russian wings advance; a distant menace of envelopment. Departure from Moscow. The retreat harassed by Kutusoff. The cold. The menace of envelopment grows greater. The cold increases. Kutusoff attempts to cut off the army at Krasnoi. The Berezina. Retreat to Vilna. Napoleon, on receiving grave despatches from Paris, decides to leave the army at Smorgoni. He puts Murat in command. The end of the army.

**T**HE Tsar was at Vilna, still the centre of prolonged discussions. The plan, which had been theoretically adopted a few weeks previously, had again been put in question. The idea had been to make a stand only on the famous "prepared positions" between the junction of the Dvina and the Dnieper, behind the Berezina. But some maintained that it would be better to abandon this arrangement, for it was imperative at all costs to avoid providing Napoleon with the smallest chance of a great victory; with this object in view, the Russians should refuse battle, bury themselves ever deeper in the interior of their vast country, dragging the invader after them, until he was exhausted, await the winter, and then make a counter-attack. "Your Empire," observed Rostopchin to the Tsar, "has two powerful defences—its vastness and its climate. The Emperor of Russia would be formidable in Moscow, terrible in Kazan, invincible in Tobolsk"—this was carrying the hypothesis to extreme lengths! The Tsar, who was by no means anxious to go to Tobolsk, was wavering, when suddenly,

## THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

on the evening of the 24th of June, 1812, he received news that the French had crossed the Niemen more quickly than had been expected, and that Napoleon, then at Kovno, was marching on Vilna. He accordingly evacuated the town in hot haste and fell back with his army on to the positions already described. It was high time.

For Murat was already galloping in the direction of the Lithuanian capital. Davout's corps was also marching rapidly on Vilna, followed by the Guards and the Emperor. On the 28th, the King of Naples, wearing his famous Polish costume of 1806, entered the town, where Napoleon took up his quarters on the following day.

### **Napoleon in Vilna.**

He was obliged to call a halt there, for it had already become necessary to regroup the army corps. The difficulty of maintaining order along that huge battle-front had become apparent even at this early hour. The corps had not all been able to cross the Niemen abreast. Jerome's troops had been left behind. Moreover, a torrential downpour of rain had spread disorder in the other corps, and those first few days had produced thousands of stragglers between the river and Vilna, while the horses, who had been fed on unripe rye, were dying like flies. Davout was ordered merely to pursue Bagration, whom Jerome, who had at last crossed the Niemen further south, could take in the rear. The other corps, destined to attack Barclay, were to remain where they were for a few days and re-form opposite the Dvina.

Napoleon thought that the Tsar, duly impressed by the crossing of the Niemen, would speedily see the error of his ways and sue for peace, and everybody about him shared his optimism. Méjan, the Councillor of State, who was accompanying Eugene, wrote that before the end of August the Russians "would be begging for peace—on bended knee!"

But at that moment Alexander was miles away from any such intention. His confidence was supported by the resolution of the Russian people, who showed themselves even more determined than he had expected to turn the "Little Father's" war against the French Antichrist into a national, almost a religious conflict. The peasants were being instructed to lay bare their fields and burn their villages behind the retreating Russian armies; the invader would

### **The Russian Retreat.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

wear himself out in that wilderness. The hapless moujiks obeyed with passive humility and at times with sullen determination. Obviously the French were to find themselves opposed by a people quite as much as by an army. Furthermore, thanks to the good offices of Bernadotte, Alexander had, on the 18th of July, 1812, signed the Treaty of Örebro with England, who promised him huge subsidies, and English vessels appearing between Riga and Cronstadt were greeted by the Russian bands with the strains of *God Save the King*, to the supreme delight of Germaine de Staël, who, having sought refuge in St. Petersburg, "loudly applauded this national anthem of all Europe." Bernadotte was making ever more friendly advances and the Tsar was hoping that time would undermine the "unnatural" alliances concluded between Napoleon and Vienna and Berlin; for he was relying on a long war, a war that would drag on interminably.

This should have made Napoleon all the more anxious to expedite matters. But he remained in Vilna for nearly three weeks. Narbonne, who was with him, declared that this delay compromised the campaign from the very beginning.

Meanwhile, the Russians were profiting by the delay to settle into their famous positions. But Barclay was now convinced that they left much to be desired, and was already showing signs of wishing to retreat very much further. He represented the temporising element in the army. Bagration, on the other hand, arrived in the region of the Dnieper infuriated at having abandoned so much Russian territory, and many of the officers in the Tsar's immediate circle shared his indignation. Every inch of "Holy Russia," they maintained, should be hotly contested. In the end, this party won the day. The Tsar, who was still wavering, eventually decided in favour of the original plan—to turn and face the enemy on the line of the Rivers Dvina-Berezina-Dnieper.

But Bagration, since he was retreating unwillingly, had moved too slowly; Barclay, on the other hand, having fallen back quickly with his army, a dangerous gap had been created between them in the region of Minsk. On the 3rd of July, Davout hurled himself into it; had he been supported he could have overwhelmed Bagration and

**Bagration  
Menaced.**

## THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

surrounded him. In Vilna, Napoleon was following and keeping in close touch with the operation. He was relying on Jerome, who, with the 6th corps, was holding the right wing of the Grand Army, to catch the Russians between himself and Davout. But Jerome, after having delayed in crossing the Niemen, had subsequently exhausted his troops by badly calculated marches. Moreover, he sent no news and the Emperor was growing impatient. "You are compromising the whole success of the campaign on the right," he wrote to him on the 4th. And, indeed, Davout had been obliged to slow down in order to await the Prince, who, when he did eventually reach Bagration, bungled the whole business. Napoleon, exasperated beyond endurance, placed his brother

### **Jerome's Disgrace.**

under the command of Davout, who was to assume the responsibility for the enveloping movement. On the 13th of July this might still have been successful. But Jerome, choking with indignation at this decision, refused to submit, and, incredible as it may seem, handed over his command, contrary to all the rules of war, to his embarrassed Chief of Staff, and without giving the Emperor any warning, left the army. "What a ridiculous exhibition!" exclaimed Napoleon. But, for once, he was lenient; it meant calling a council of war, and he contented himself with sending his sorry brother back to his own kingdom. But too many golden hours had been wasted for Bagration not to have seized the opportunity to slip away. The enveloping movement had failed. And Davout had to be satisfied with driving the Russians, who, as a matter of fact, had been badly buffeted, into the marshes round Pinsk, and thus succeeded in separating Bagration's army from the forces under Barclay.

The Emperor, at this moment, was fully occupied with his manoeuvre against Barclay. Having ordered Ney and Oudinot to make a frontal attack with 60,000 men, he intended to strike himself on the right with Eugene and three divisions of cavalry—about 140,000 men—and having forced a passage, to debouch on the east of the Drissa camp to the rear of the Russians, thus cutting them off from both Moscow and St. Petersburg. But time

### **Russia and Turkey.**

was pressing, especially as the news from the Balkans was far from favourable. The Turks were definitely making peace with Russia, and the armistice had already set free Tormazoff's army, which had



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

reached southern Russia and was menacing the French right wing. As soon as peace had been signed, Admiral Tchitchagoff's army, the only Russian force that still remained on the Danube, would likewise be liberated and would be able to join up with Tormazoff in less than a month and greatly add to the menace.

At last, on the 16th of July, Napoleon left Vilna. Operations against Barclay had begun and the enveloping movement was already clearly defined. Murat, followed by part of the army, was bearing down on the Russian left wing. But Barclay, already scenting danger, slipped away in time and again

**The Russians  
Again  
Retreat.**

beat a retreat. The Tsar, grieved by this further abandonment of territory, left the army, though he placed his cautious lieutenant in supreme command. On the 19th the whole of Barclay's army was in retreat; by means of forced marches it reached the region of Vitebsk and then of Smolensk, where it hoped to get into touch once more with Bagration, now also in full retreat. But in order to cover the road to St. Petersburg and prevent Macdonald, on the extreme left of the French, from advancing along it, Barclay sent Wittgenstein to his right with orders to bar the way.

Napoleon had no alternative but to hasten in pursuit of the enemy. But, delayed at Ostrovno by a rearguard action conducted by Ostermann's corps, he entered Vitebsk only on the evening of the 27th, when Barclay was already on

**Barclay  
Escapes.**

the way to Smolensk. Having learnt that Bagration, defeated at Mogileff, had fallen back in a southerly direction, Barclay gave up all hope of getting into touch with him before Smolensk, and decided not to make a stand until he had reached that still far distant town.

But this meant that Napoleon was being inevitably lured further and further into Russia. At Vitebsk he seemed again to be hesitating about advancing any further. The army, on reaching this new stopping place was footsore and weary and already on the verge of collapse. It had been forced to march from

**Terrific Heat.**

Vilna to Vitebsk through terrific heat, "far worse than the heat in Spain," wrote one veteran. It was breaking up and dying for want of water. The unfortunate troops, who five months later were to perish of frost-bite, were apparently on the point of succumbing to the unbearable heat

## THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

aggravated by the terrible dust. "Cheer up!" the valiant Captain François was reduced to telling his men, "I have seen worse in Egypt!" The troops melted away under that brazen sky, the cavalry horses being reduced from 22,000 to 14,000. Even the Guard, without having seen any fighting, fell from 37,000 to 28,000 men. It became necessary once more to reorganise the army and give it rest. Already one and all, from the Staff to the rank and file, were hoping and praying that the Emperor would stop the whole proceeding at Vitebsk and await the enemy there.

True, for the moment, Napoleon had no intention of marching on Moscow, but Vitebsk seemed to him an unsuitable spot and

### **Napoleon Arranges to Advance.**

the season far too young to think of taking up winter quarters. When he had reached Smolensk, and only then, would he demobilise. He wished to allow his wings to gain ground, both left and right, so that when he eventually called a halt Russia would be shut in on all sides. On his left, Oudinot was to push Wittgenstein in the direction of St. Petersburg, while still further on the left Macdonald was to make preparations for the siege of Riga. On the right, where the intervention of the Russian armies returning from the Danube might add to the danger, the Emperor, mistrusting Schwarzenberg and his Austrians, had detached Reynier's corps to flank them. A few days later, everything appeared to be going swimmingly on both wings. On the left, Oudinot, in spite of a counter-attack launched by Wittgenstein, was driving the latter back to the south of Polotsk, while Macdonald, having seized Mitau, was already preparing for the blockade of Riga. On the right, after a moment of mysterious panic which had forced Reynier to retreat before Tormazoff, the French forces had rallied and, reinforced by one of the Polish divisions, had continued their advance.

Thus Napoleon was enabled to advance confidently on Smolensk. He imagined Barclay and Bagration had succeeded in effecting contact there and hoped that, as a result, the Russians would at last make up their minds to fight.

### **The March on Smolensk.**

As a matter of fact, Barclay would have preferred to continue his retreating tactics, but Bagration, who had at last joined him, insisted on taking the offensive. The generalissimo gave way;

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

believing that the French army was scattered in its cantonments, he attacked in two columns at Inkowo, near Vitebsk, but met with such a speedy repulse that he seemed to have no inclination to return to the assault. In fact, he was so terrified that, finding Napoleon was again marching on Smolensk and that one of Bagration's divisions had been half decimated at Krasnoi when it tried to bar the way, he was already contemplating evacuating the town itself. On the 17th the corps commanded by Poniatowski, Davout and Ney captured the suburbs, but on the 18th, just as Napoleon was manœuvring to cut off their retreat, the Russians, after setting fire to the town, made good their escape.

The rank and file were almost as bitterly disappointed as the Emperor himself. The troops were unnerved by a campaign in which no great battle was ever fought, and an enemy in perpetual flight filled them with vague apprehensions. They had hurled themselves in pursuit and, at one moment, hoped at last to seize, surround and wipe out the foe. Barclay, isolated by Ney on the plateau of Valutina, one march to the rear of Smolensk, suddenly found himself in a dire predicament; for Murat, having appeared like a bolt from the blue, was trying to force battle on him there, while Junot, who had succeeded Jerome in command of the 6th corps and had been ordered to cross the Dnieper above Smolensk, was in a position to fall on the Russian flank and turn the improvised battle into a great victory. But the Duc d'Abrantès, already half demented, seemed to have lost his wits entirely; for in spite of the most urgent and repeated orders, he refused to budge. The behaviour of this wretched creature enabled Barclay, who had lost 7,000 men, to slip through the fingers of the French under cover of darkness on the night of the 19th, and escape.

**Junot's  
Failure.**

Napoleon had advanced beyond Smolensk in order to superintend this battle, which might have proved decisive. And he returned to the town a prey to the gravest anxiety. The question which, ever since Vitebsk, had been agitating the minds of all, was again forced upon him. "The 1812 campaign is over," he had remarked to some of the High Command at Vitebsk. "The campaign of 1813 will do the rest." He had hoped to mark the

## THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

conclusion of this "first campaign" by a brilliant victory; but both battle and victory consistently eluded him. True, to have penetrated as far as Smolensk might have been claimed as a triumph. But Europe was expecting something

### **Decision to Advance on Moscow.**

very different, and would probably interpret the interruption of the campaign as a humiliating confession of failure. Thus it was in no vain-glorious spirit that the Emperor now wished to advance on Moscow, though it was impossible to suppose that, if he showed signs of threatening the capital of Old Russia, the Russians would deliver it into his hands without a struggle. Those about him would have preferred to take up their quarters in Smolensk without further ado. But it was one of Napoleon's own lieutenants who lured him on. Murat, who had been despatched with the cavalry and Davout's corps along the Moscow road, was soon sending back the most optimistic reports which Davout's more sober statements did but little to correct.

Furthermore, the Emperor was receiving the best of news from his two wings. On the right, Schwarzenberg and Reynier had made a joint attack on Tormazoff and had put him to flight.

### **French Successes on the Wings.**

It was hoped he might be forced to retreat on Kiev. This fine achievement, moreover, reassured the Emperor with regard to the loyalty of the Austrian General, for whom he immediately demanded a Field-Marshal's baton of the Emperor of Austria. On the left, Oudinot, held up for a moment by Wittgenstein, showed a lack of enterprise quite unlike his usual self; for though he repeatedly repulsed the Russian counter-attacks, he made no attempt to advance. But having been seriously wounded in one of these engagements in which he paid the penalty for his fiery impetuosity and courage, his place was taken by Gouvion Saint-Cyr, one of the best of the French Generals. On the 18th of August the latter inflicted a crushing defeat on Wittgenstein and immediately advanced on Pskov in the direction of St. Petersburg.

These successes on the wings made it possible for the army to march on Moscow without the slightest risk of being surprised on its flanks. Napoleon, on receiving a further report from Murat, could contain himself no longer. "We must have a stupendous

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victory, a battle outside Moscow which will electrify the whole world," he declared in the presence of Duroc. "Our **Advance on Moscow.** very peril pushes us on to Moscow," he observed to Narbonne, "I have done with the objections of the wiseacres!" And on the 26th of August he gave orders for a mass march on Moscow.

The whole army was already on the move. The men, wild with excitement, were all shouting, "To Moscow!" But their ardour was quickly cooled. They had to make their way through territory laid bare and completely deserted by the mass of the inhabitants. They were now right in the heart of Russia, that cheerless country beneath a cheerless sky, a land which even the passing tourist finds depressing to the spirit and bewildering to the mind. The weather, after having been torrid, turned abominably wet, and the men sank up to their knees in mud. At Gjatsk a halt had to be called; the wagons stuck fast in the mud and could not keep up. The Emperor allowed the troops to take a breather—he wanted them to rest; the information he was receiving now made him feel certain of having his great battle.

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For the Russians had made up their minds not to surrender Moscow without a desperate struggle.

The invasion of Russia by the French armies had driven the country to exasperation. And those about the Tsar, who had returned to St. Petersburg, were loud in their abuse—this time of Barclay. Was he going to surrender the Holy City to the enemy without striking a blow? As for making peace, not a soul contemplated such a possibility, and it was quite unnecessary for Bernadotte to urge the Tsar to hold out against the French. "I am preaching against my own kith and kin," the wretch observed to

**Bernadotte at Abo.** Suchterlen, "but I know of only one way of saving Europe, and that is by crushing the monster."

Madame de Staël went to Stockholm to prevail upon this native of Bearn to put his fine words into action, and succeeded in persuading him to go to Abo, where the Tsar would meet him. Alexander, declared the lady, was all eagerness to have "the advice of so great a soldier." The interview was extremely cordial. The Crown Prince undertook to hurl an army

## THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

into Germany in "Bonaparte's" rear, and the Tsar, as a reward, definitely promised him Norway and the restitution of Pomerania. Thus Bernadotte would receive far more than his thirty pieces of silver.

The Tsar returned from Abo reassured and comforted, though, as a matter of fact, less inclined than he had been to fight a pitched battle at once. For he now had everything to gain by allowing Napoleon to bury himself in the heart of Russia; Bernadotte's intervention in Germany would be all the more devastating. But public opinion in St. Petersburg was now unanimously in favour of taking the offensive. Barclay, who was of foreign extraction, could not, it was argued, share the feeling of humiliation which was searing the heart of every Russian. It was imperative to have an "old Russian" at the head of the armies, somebody, in short, who would know how to dispute every inch of Muscovite territory. Oh, for a Souvaroff! Failing him, they still had Kutusoff. True, he had not yet wiped out his defeat at Austerlitz, though this had not made him forfeit the confidence of the nation. The old man was a regular Slav, a wily opportunist and an enemy of all "systems." Tolstoi's description of him, watching the conflict at Austerlitz with supreme indifference, is undoubtedly a gross exaggeration of the fatalistic side of his nature. But he was certainly an opportunist, no more opposed than Barclay to temporising or less in favour of counter-attack than Bagration, and determined to pursue either policy, or each in turn, according as necessity dictated. He promised to fight a pitched battle, but did not sacrifice Barclay, who, with great nobility, consented to support him in the subordinate position of leader of one of the armies.

For the time being Kutusoff was in favour of defending Moscow. Toll, Barclay's Chief of Staff, had found an excellent position in front of the Moskva on which to post the Russian forces; it consisted of the little group of hills overlooking Borodino through which Napoleon would have to pass. The construction of a few redoubts would turn the position into a regular fortress which they would defend and then fall upon their foe when he was exhausted. On the right, after leaving Smolensk, three hills form a semi-circle

**Battle of  
Borodino.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

above the plain through which the road runs; the first, known as Schwardino Hill, was flanked by a second called, on account of the earthworks improvised by the Russians, the Three Arrows. The third became famous as the Grand Redoubt, so named because of the more important works constructed on it. Between the Three Arrows and the Grand Redoubt there was a fairly deep gully, the Semenovskoie Ravine. This little group of hills was bounded on the north by the Smolensk-Moscow road, and on the south by the old road running through the village of Utitza. On the far side of the former there are some more hills overlooking the little towns of Borodino and Gorki. But they are not so steep, and for this reason Kutusoff was convinced that the attack against him would be launched there. He accordingly massed his main forces, consisting of the whole of Barclay's army, at this point, leaving Bagration's weaker contingent to occupy the positions I have described.

Contrary to his expectations, however, Napoleon had made up his mind to attack the hills on the right of the road; he also intended to turn this group and by sending one of his corps along the old road to Utitza, to surround the whole of Bagration's army. On the afternoon of the 5th of September he had advanced opposite these positions and, losing no time, immediately captured Schwardino Hill, from which he obtained a splendid view of the surrounding country. Here he took up his headquarters. But, in order to confirm Kutusoff in his error, he arranged to make Eugene attack the village of Borodino on the left of the road with as much noise and hullabaloo as possible. Meanwhile Poniatowski's corps was to creep cautiously towards Utitza, along the old road, with the object of outflanking from the south the positions on the right, which were also to be attacked by the forces under Eugene and Ney, the Grand Redoubt by Eugene, who in an hour's time was to make for it from Borodino, the Three Arrows by Ney on one side and Davout on the other, the cavalry being divided between them. On Schwardino Hill the Emperor held Friant's division and the Guards in reserve. Kutusoff, as we know, thinking he would be attacked on his right, had stationed almost the whole of Barclay's army there, flanked by Platow's Cossacks between Gorki and Novoe Celo; in his centre, between Gorki and the

## THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

Grand Redoubt, he had Dokhturoff's corps, and on his left, on the hills to the south, Bagration's army, which, contrary to his expectations, was to receive the main shock.

On the 6th all was quiet. On the 7th, before dawn, the French troops picked up arms. Eugene, hurling himself on Borodino, captured it immediately and was ready to turn at once on the Grand Redoubt, while Ney and Davout attacked the Three

### **A Desperate Struggle.**

Arrows hill from opposite sides. Ney, after a desperate struggle, made himself master of the right-hand Arrow and repulsed all the counter-attacks, while Razout, one of his division commanders, seized the left-hand Arrow, which was recovered by the Russians and again taken by the French. Meanwhile Davout had been shot off his horse and Murat had taken command of his corps, and, indeed, of the whole operation on the Three Arrows. He immediately swept the plateau with his cavalry, driving the Russians, who put up a gallant resistance, to the edge of the Semenovskoie Ravine, in imminent danger of being precipitated over the edge.

In the meantime Eugene had advanced against the Grand Redoubt and carried it at one fell swoop, driving its defenders towards the same ravine, where, in the hurly-burly, they ran into the arms of their comrades of the Three Arrows, and, like them, were caught between two fires which raked them from above and soon decimated them. If the French could only have remained

### **Napoleon Begged for Re- inforcements.**

masters of the ravine, Bagration's army, cut in half, could have been destroyed in a few hours. Murat and Ney were well aware of this—victory was within their grasp. But they required strong reinforcements, for which they urgently begged the Emperor.

As we know, the only reserves the latter had at his disposal were Friant's division and the Guards. It was only ten o'clock, and at that season of the year, more particularly as Barclay's forces remained intact, the battle might drag on until seven o'clock in the evening; in the circumstances how could he divest himself

### **Friant to the Rescue.**

entirely of troops by hurling the Guards into the furnace? He despatched only Friant, as a matter of fact, a little too late; for Kutusoff, duly warned, had already sent reinforcements to Bagration and ordered the



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

recapture of the Grand Redoubt, against which he was hurling fresh troops. At the end of an hour, the French, after the most furious fighting, were driven from the hill, but after another sanguinary engagement Eugene succeeded in recapturing it with Gérard's contingent. Barclay, who had hastened up, now took the battle in hand and once more captured the Grand Redoubt, while from the Semenovskoie Ravine he launched an attack on the Three Arrows. At this moment Friant arrived, and hurling himself into the ravine itself drove back the Russians, his vigorous intervention supporting the troops fighting on the two hills. Just at this juncture Bagration was killed and his

**Bagration  
Killed.**

army immediately began to waver. The Russians were also informed that Poniatowski's corps was on their heels; having gained Utitza he was threatening to surround Bagration's army, which was already disorganised owing to the loss of its leader. The Crown Prince of Würtemberg, who was in command of the Russian forces occupying the ravine, was obliged to hasten up to meet this menace; but this once more gave the French an opportunity to seize the ravine, which was strewn with dead and dying, and cut the Russian army in two. For the second time Ney and Murat begged Napoleon for reinforcements. The latter had already ordered the Young Guards to march and had placed himself at their head when terrible confusion was observed on the French left. Platow had hurled himself on the rear of Borodino and was hot on their heels. Napoleon, unable to gauge the importance of this diversion, ordered the Young Guards to halt and waited. Meanwhile, however, the Russians reoccupied the ravine in full force, and the opportunity, offered—perhaps—for the second time, was, for the second time, allowed to slip.

For the moment, it seemed all-important to seize the Grand Redoubt once and for all, and from Schwardino the Emperor had the plateau swept by his 120 guns, after which he ordered Ney to attack. From the ravine the latter again scaled the hill, which was literally swept by bullets. The Russians defended the position with magnificent courage, but before long the deluge of artillery completely demoralised them. Murat

**Murat  
Charges.**

saw his opportunity; from the ridge of the Three Arrows he launched a terrific cavalry charge right through the ravine itself and up the Grand Redoubt, while

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Eugene, under cover of the charge, reoccupied the position. Murat and Ney were now side by side with him on the plateau but surged over it, and the Russian army was partly caught in the angle formed by the French troops. Seeing that all was lost, its one thought was to escape from the field of battle under the redoubled fire of the French artillery.

It was only five o'clock; there were still two hours left in which to complete the annihilation of the Russian army. For this the Emperor would have had to bring the whole of the Guards into action. But, driven to bay, the Russians would doubtless pull themselves together and again stand their ground. After the rest of his army had suffered such heavy losses, would it be wise, so far from home, to expose the Guards also to being cut to pieces in the midst of victory? Napoleon refused to let them run the risk. Three hundred pieces of artillery had now been collected on the ridges, and were bombarding the Russians as they fled. "They have asked for it! Let them have it!" exclaimed the

### **A Pyrrhic Victory.**

Emperor. But the enemy's army, though reduced to shreds, succeeded in retiring. It left 45,000 on the battlefield; but the French also had over 10,000 killed and 14,000 wounded, while among the casualties were 47 Generals and over 100 Colonels. It was for this reason that, on the evening of this hard-won victory, the Emperor looked almost as gloomy as if he had suffered defeat. But he hoped at least to dazzle Europe with a brilliant bulletin. Kutusoff, however, with incredible audacity, forestalled him and claimed the victory for himself. St. Petersburg, completely deceived, was illuminated, and Europe was also only too willing to be hoodwinked.

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Meanwhile, on the 8th, Murat was galloping towards Moscow. Kutusoff had put in an appearance there merely to announce his intention not to defend the city. With his decimated army he entered its southern quarter with the object of finding some other

### **The Russians Evacuate Moscow.**

means of taking the revenge which, as a matter of fact, his men at that moment regarded as somewhat problematical. "As they left the city, both men and officers," declared an eye-witness, "were weeping with rage and despair." Rostopchin, the

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Governor of Moscow, was preparing to evacuate the place, but only after having made all arrangements for its destruction; he let bands of robbers out of prison and arming them with torches—this is no myth—told them to set fire to everything, right and left, and, to make doubly sure, took the fire-engines away with him.

Meanwhile the French were marching exultantly on Moscow, which they had been led to regard as a veritable Capua where they would be able to take their ease in the lap of luxury. When

### **The French Enter.**

the army corps reached the low hills that dominate the City of the Hundred Cupolas a great shout arose: "Moscow! Moscow!" The Emperor galloped up; he was radiant! They would install themselves and await the reinforcements which had already been despatched from France and without a shadow of doubt receive offers of peace from Alexander.

On the 15th the Emperor entered the Holy City and took up his quarters in the Kremlin, while the army was distributed through the various quarters. On the morning of the 16th he was informed that huge flames were rising from some vodka stores, and then from the oriental bazaars and hundreds—nay, thousands of other buildings. As there were no fire-engines, all hope of

### **Moscow in Flames.**

extinguishing the flames had to be abandoned, and the soldiers, seeing the wealth of Moscow being devoured by the fire, began to pillage and plunder.

The disaster was quickly putting an end to all discipline. The Emperor was hurried out of the Kremlin, where there was a powder-magazine which threatened to blow up at any moment, and three-quarters of the army having already retired outside the city, he too left it. The Guards alone remained inside endeavouring to fight the flames.

For three whole days the fire raged. At last on the 19th it subsided. "Out of 9,300 houses and 800 mansions," wrote a Moscow priest, a few days later, "there cannot be more than 2,000 houses left." As the Kremlin had been saved, Napoleon installed himself there once more, and the army took up their quarters wherever they could find a roof. But the glare of this fantastic fire enabled the Emperor to see more clearly; it seemed certain that the Russians themselves had set fire to the city and thus the prospect of a savage and, if necessary, insensate and endless

## THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

resistance was confirmed. There would certainly be no offer of peace.

It was the Emperor who took the initiative; through the medium of one or two important personages who had remained in Moscow

**Napoleon Approaches the Tsar.** he submitted proposals to St. Petersburg which, far from shaking the Tsar's determination, merely served to strengthen it. "Bonaparte," he argued, must be extremely anxious. As, indeed, he was—

among other things with regard to Kutusoff's aims and manœuvres. Sebastiani, who, in charge of a body of cavalry, had been told to follow the tracks of the forces defeated at the Moskva, had lost sight of them. When, a few days later, further reconnoitring bodies were on the point of being despatched, it was learned that on the Moscow-Smolensk road itself a convoy had been captured in a smart attack, or "hourra," by Cossacks. The latter could certainly not have ventured against the French rear unless the whole of the Russian army were not far distant. And, indeed, immediately on leaving Moscow, Kutusoff had turned in a southerly direction and then, taking the road westward, had again dived south and was found to have taken up his position in the camp at Tarutino, whither, for the time being, the French had to be content with sending Murat to keep watch over his movements.

The Emperor was extremely perplexed. The most elementary caution seemed to advise returning to Smolensk for the winter. But he was obsessed by the idea—which proved to be amply justified—that, after

**Napoleon Perplexed.**

his steady advance to power since 1800, the first step backward would be fatal and give the signal for a general upheaval in Europe and to the breaking up of the alliances and even, perhaps, of his Empire. But he listened to the dictates of his own good sense, which told him that retreat was inevitable. And in his ever-fertile and resolute mind there arose a plan which would, so to speak, make the retreat menacing and, therefore, impressive. It was now the 18th of September; there were still two months left before winter—time enough to carry out a grand operation which, by disguising the retreat, would give it the appearance of a grandiose manœuvre. He would fall back on Vitebsk, but by bearing northwards would give the impression of suddenly menacing St. Petersburg. He communicated this plan to his

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

lieutenants, but found them gloomy, discouraged, and sceptical, even more morally than physically exhausted, and thus unable to produce the necessary energy for carrying out this audacious offensive manœuvre. He accordingly abandoned the idea, and

**He Decides  
to Leave  
Moscow.**

from that moment seemed to lose his bearings. He knew he must leave Moscow, but the thought of doing so was extremely repugnant to him, and he prolonged his stay dangerously—in the faint hope that Alexander would decide to open negotiations. But the Tsar was more than ever resolved to stand firm. "This is the beginning of my campaign!" he exclaimed on receiving from Moscow the offer to negotiate.

The exclamation was all too terribly true. The Russian General Staff was now planning a movement of forces which might irrevocably cut off the retreat of the victors of the Moskva. While Kutusoff, in Tarutino, was keeping watch on the French lingering on in Moscow, there was every possibility that two armies, heavily reinforced, one from the north and the other from the south, would effect contact on the banks of the Berezina, and bar the road to Napoleon's forces. In the north, Wittgenstein, who had at first been driven back by Gouvion Saint-Cyr, had succeeded in regaining a footing on the Dvina, and had been reinforced by

**The Russian  
Lines Active.**

the troops which, after the Abo interview, the Tsar had been able safely to withdraw from Finland. In the south, Tchitchagoff, set free by the Peace of Bucharest, was joining Tormazoff in the region of the lower Dnieper. Thus Wittgenstein, descending the Dvina towards the Beresina, and Tchitchagoff, advancing up the Dnieper towards the same spot, would join forces. They each had about 60,000 men and the two Russian armies were already beginning to move.

On the 13th of October Moscow awoke to find the weather extremely cold; there was a fairly hard frost. This was a warning, and Napoleon seemed to understand. "We must make haste!" he exclaimed. "In three weeks' time we must be in winter quarters." He immediately summoned a council of war, and after some further discussion, it was decided to leave. In order to prove by a signal gesture that he was still care-free and, from Moscow, was continuing to direct the Empire down to the most insignificant details, he signed, on the 15th of October, 1812, the decree

## THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

granting the *Comédie Française* its statute, whereupon he returned to his study of the routes. Eventually his choice was determined by an incident that occurred. Truth to tell, it was a sign that he was not altogether the man he had been, that he now fairly frequently allowed himself to be influenced in this way. On the morning of the 18th a violent bombardment was heard to the south-west. It was Kutusoff, who, abandoning his attitude of inertia, was attacking Murat's contingent. The latter, after having vigorously repulsed the attack, was falling back on Woronowo.

**Napoleon  
Leaves  
Moscow.**

This was another warning and proved decisive. Napoleon made up his mind to go and crush Kutusoff, and this settled the question of route. He would go southwards. On the morning of the 19th, having left Mortier with a garrison in the Kremlin to give the impression that his departure was merely temporary, the Emperor at last made his exit from the fatal city of Moscow with a force of 100,000 men.

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Eugene was in the van, followed by Davout, Ney and the Guards. An endless train of wagons, a whole world of vehicles, which for weeks to come was to encumber the march, brought up the rear. Napoleon was now wondering whether it would not be wiser to take the shortest route, and twenty-four hours later he left the road he had taken and turned back across the steppes in a north-westerly direction. But Kutusoff was barring the way, and on the 23rd his troops had to be driven off at Malo-Yaroslavetz. The Emperor had already given up all idea of fighting a battle with his exhausted and encumbered army. It was imperative to reach Smolensk with all possible speed, and in the end he took the road by which he had come.

**Napoleon  
Nearly  
Captured.**

By leaving the district infested by Kutusoff, there was a possibility of escaping the Cossacks, who in a "hourra" on the previous day had for a moment surrounded the Emperor himself and almost captured him.

It was now that Napoleon, for the first time in his career, gave the impression of having lost grip of things, and until his fall it was only at rare intervals that he recovered it. His one thought was to escape disaster, and this was yet possible. The Grand Army,

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

still in good order, might be able to reach Smolensk, where it would be decided whether the retreat should be continued. All half-measure had been abandoned, for Napoleon had sent Mortier orders to blow up the Kremlin and join the main army, which had

**Kutusoff  
Harasses the  
French.**

been reorganised, with Ney in the van and Davout bringing up the rear. Kutusoff seemed to have vanished into thin air, but, as a matter of fact, he was dogging the march of the French army, constantly harassing it with his Cossack bands, who carried off isolated groups or stragglers, ten men here, a hundred there. The wily old Russian was always hovering round, knowing that this served the Tsar's purpose and the advance of the other Russian armies and aiming solely at hampering the French retreat, though he was constantly looking out for an opportunity to cut the huge French column in half. On the 1st of November he made his first attempt to do so at Viazma, where Eugene, who was ahead of Davout, thought his flank had been pierced. He was only saved by the sudden energetic intervention of the Duke of Auerstädt.

Between the 1st and the 8th no incidents occurred. The weather, after the cold snap in Moscow, remained mild. Provisions would hold out until Smolensk was reached, where it was expected that the magazines would be well stocked. Gourgaud and others maintain that Ségur is guilty of grossly exaggerating the lack of supplies from which he declares the army suffered from the first; order was still maintained. But, just after Dorogobuzh had been

**The Bitter  
Cold.**

passed, it suddenly turned terribly cold; the snow fell thick and fast for hours and days at a time, making the march difficult and before long extremely painful. It was a piece of bad luck! In the previous year St. Petersburg had not been frozen as late as the 31st of December. But the winter of 1812 proved to be the most rigorous that Russia had known for many a long year. Napoleon was filled with anxiety; he already felt it might not be possible to remain in Smolensk. For, at Dorogobuzh, he had received news which depressed him deeply and even filled him with alarm.

It came from the wings. In the south Tchitchagoff had taken the offensive and driven back Schwarzenberg and Reynier from the line of the Styr to that of the Bug. And yet, on leaving Moscow,

## THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

Napoleon had ordered Schwarzenberg to hold his ground; but the new Austrian Field-Marshal seemed to have become suddenly paralysed. This was the first result of recent events. Matters were turning out badly, and he remembered Metternich's instruc-

**Schwarzen-  
berg's  
Duplicity.**

tions and the compact made with the Russians themselves in June—"to do each other the least possible amount of harm." Already a French officer who had been sent to his General Headquarters to urge him to fight wrote saying that "it would be no easy matter to persuade the Austrians to do so"; in fact, Gourgaud categorically accuses Schwarzenberg of having cleared the way for the Russian army from the south. In the north there was not actual treachery; but Gouvion, unable to withstand the pressure of Wittgenstein's army, which had been heavily reinforced, had ceded part of the Dvina line and had allowed himself to be cut off from Macdonald, who was blockading Riga. Whereupon he had been obliged to hand back the command of his corps to Oudinot, who had returned with his wounds only half healed and, according to those about him, in an extraordinarily embittered frame of mind, which made him unfit to direct delicate operations with coolness and judgment. As a matter of fact, Victor had been sent to his help from Smolensk; but the Duke of Belluna, generally so dashing, also seemed to be beside himself and incapable of

**Wittgenstein's  
Advance.**

taking action. Like Oudinot, he allowed himself to be driven back by Wittgenstein, who was soon master of the whole of the Dvina and in a position to reach the upper Berezina and meet Tchitchagoff, on the very heels of the retreating French army.

Such was the news which Napoleon had received at Dorogobuzh. He had also been given despatches from Paris which made him turn pale, but he had thrust them into his pocket without revealing their contents. He sent orders to his two wings calculated to stop the advance of the Russian armies and even drive them back, and hastened his march on Smolensk.

The cold became more and more intense; it was almost impossible to remain on horseback. The Emperor himself dismounted and, for hours at a stretch, walked on foot through the snow with a stick in his hand, in the middle of his men, who were moved to tears.

**The Cold  
Increases.**



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

The horses fell out by the thousand and were immediately used to satisfy the pangs of hunger which were beginning to be felt. Of the magnificent cavalry corps which Murat had led across the Niemen, only 1,200 men were still mounted when Smolensk was reached!

Napoleon's army entered that town on the 10th of November, only to be met with bitter disappointment. Victor's corps, which had been stationed there for a month, had largely depleted the stores. The news of this spread like wildfire, and the famished soldiers fell in a body on all that remained. This served to increase the demoralisation of the troops and to undermine discipline. Moreover, it was impossible to linger here either. Napoleon had been warned that there was imminent danger of being cut off in his retreat; owing to Schwarzenberg's persistent and, perhaps, deliberate inactivity, Tchitchagoff was already approaching the confluence of the Beresina and the Dnieper, while on the north Wittgenstein was driving back Oudinot and Victor and was within a stone's throw of the little river. However, it was impossible to leave Smolensk within twenty-four hours, for the troops had set their hearts on having a rest there. The Emperor accordingly decided to leave in echelons, so that each corps might spend four days in the town.

### **The French Return to Smolensk.**

On the 10th the advance guard was already on the road to Minsk; the rest were to follow at intervals of twenty-four hours. But this arrangement, by creating dangerous gaps, was too favourable to Kutusoff's tactics for him not to profit by it. Eugene, on reaching the ravine of Losmina, near Krasnoi, found his road barred by Miloradovičh, and only with great difficulty succeeded in extricating himself. Davout, who followed him, was obliged to fight; he faced the enemy and cut his way through. But Ney, who entered the fatal defile less than twenty-four hours later, seemed doomed. He displayed extraordinary coolness; warned in time, he succeeded in finding a cut to the left, and after making a wide detour, rejoined the main body. All this, however, meant a heavy toll of dead and prisoners, and when the army mustered at Orsha it was reduced to 24,000 men still in the ranks, with 14,000 following or straggling behind. This was pretty well

### **The French Almost Cut Off.**

## THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

all that remained of the half-million men who had crossed the Niemen. And the end was not yet.

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In vain had Napoleon pressed on; the two Russian armies from the north and the south, now separated by a distance of barely fifty miles, would certainly effect contact behind the Beresina before the arrival of this hapless remnant of the Grand Army. Already Tchitchagoff, in the far west, had occupied Minsk, through which the French would have to pass, and whither Maret, who had remained at Vilna, had sent large supplies, and was marching on Borissoff, where there was the only stone bridge across the Beresina. True, an attempt might have been made to go in a northerly direction, but in that case the retreating forces would have fallen in with Wittgenstein, who was now coming down-stream, driving Oudinot and Victor before him along the left bank. The latter were, at all events, bringing the Emperor's less sorely tried troops than his own, some 25,000 to 26,000 men, who, with his own 24,000 combatants, would enable him to put up a fight while the river was being crossed.

But, if Borissoff were occupied, where could they cross? In the retreat they had sacrificed, among other impedimenta, the pontoon equipment. True, the river was not very broad—barely seventy-five feet—"at most as wide as the Rue Royale in Paris," wrote Marbot. But the banks were marshy, and unfortunately a sudden thaw had, to some extent, softened the ground. Bridges at least two hundred feet wide would be required. Perhaps they would succeed in reaching Borissoff before Tchitchagoff. But on the evening of the 23rd it was learnt that the latter had seized the town, together with its bridge.

**The Russians  
Seize  
Borissoff.**

The Emperor received the news on horseback. He sprang to the ground looking utterly distraught. "So they are there!" he cried. But he immediately seized his maps to see if he could find some way of crossing. Thiers attributes to Corbineau the rôle of *deus ex machina*. Having been separated from Oudinot's corps, this General had descended the left bank, but wishing to cross to the right bank with his division had luckily discovered a kind of ford at Studianka, north of Borissoff. As a matter of fact, he merely

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

arrived in time to confirm what had already been found out, an invaluable discovery! The Emperor immediately made up his mind. Two trestle-bridges were to be flung across the river at Studianka, but, in order to throw dust in the enemy's eyes, he made a demonstration in front of Borissoff, and confirming the fact that the enemy had destroyed the bridge there, made a pretence of trying to restore it. Meanwhile Generals Eblé and

### **Bridges Improvised at Studianka.**

Chasseloup-Laubat, entrusted with the task of constructing two bridges with all possible speed, one for the infantry and the other for wagons, were hastening to Studianka, while the army, cutting to the right, were also making in the same direction. On the morning of the 26th the foot-bridge was ready, and the whole of Oudinot's corps of 9,300 men crossed during the day and took up their positions to protect the passage of the bulk of the army against a possible enemy attack. By four o'clock in the afternoon the other bridge had been completed and the wagons began to cross. But at eight o'clock it gave way. All through the night Eblé, who behaved like a hero, stood up to his waist in the freezing water, directing his pontoniers, and by dawn on the 27th the bridge had been repaired. During the night of the 26th to the 27th the first bridge had not been used. An attempt had been made to get the 14,000 stragglers, who had joined up again, to cross; but the unfortunate wretches had found some straw on the left bank on which they could lie down and sleep, and some wood to make fires, and refused to leave this bivouac. All appeals made to them fell on deaf ears. On the 27th, all along the front, the passage of troops was resumed in a far more orderly fashion than rumour would have us believe. Napoleon did not cross until late in the afternoon in the rear of the Guards. The corps under Eugene, Ney, Poniatowski and Junot, all sadly reduced in numbers, crossed the river in turn, while Davout brought up the rear. The proceeding was by no means the chaotic muddle it is alleged to have been; the regiments stepped on to the bridge to the sound of fife and drum. Only Victor's corps still remained on

### **Confusion at Studianka.**

the left bank, when the 14,000 stragglers who had loitered behind, terrified by the rumour of a Cossack attack, suddenly rushed down to the river. The result, according to an eye-witness, was indescrib-

## THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

able confusion and tumult. In order to cut their way through, Victor's troops had to draw their swords. Captain François declares that he struggled for six hours to reach the bridge. Meanwhile, the wagons were rattling across the other bridge. But there were still a good many of them and beneath their weight the bridge once more gave way. It was repaired but again broke, and panic having seized the stragglers on the left bank, the most terrible scenes of disorder and despair occurred.

Meanwhile, Kutusoff, who had kept close behind, had warned Wittgenstein and Tchitchagoff that the French army was crossing at Studianka. They hurried up, but the temporary thaw had made the roads difficult and retarded their advance. Oudinot had held the Russian detachments for two days on the right bank and Victor on the left, so that the crossing was effected before the arrival of the main Russian forces. As both Wittgenstein and Kutusoff were still on the left bank, Napoleon gave orders for the

### **The Stragglers Left Behind.**

bridges to be burned. The only French troops to be left behind were the 10,000 to 12,000 stragglers who had refused to cross the river on the first night. They were destined to be killed or taken prisoner, and their tragic fate must have been responsible for the myth of "the Beresina disaster." It was not a disaster, for, as a matter of fact, the army had merely been relieved of its stragglers; on the contrary, it constituted a most glorious page of the campaign, and proved that any disorder that might have occurred among the troops could still easily be remedied.

### **Retreat to Vilna.**

The army had crossed and was making straight for Vilna. But though it was attacked on the flanks by wild hordes of Cossacks, it was far more seriously menaced in the rear. After a brief delay, Kutusoff had crossed the Beresina, and was once again on the heels of the French. Ney, who was in command of the rearguard, showed admirable coolness and courage and always managed to repulse the more serious attacks. But the foe who took the heaviest toll of the French army was not the Cossack but the cold. It had once again become terrific; the thermometer fell from 3½° F. to -1° F.,

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

and this deadly cold literally laid whole battalions low. It was like a scythe cutting into the body. One terrible never-to-be-forgotten night, the thermometer fell to  $-17\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}\text{F}$ . and the ground was strewn with frozen corpses. Nevertheless the army was reaching the outskirts of Vilna, the goal of this march of martyrs. On the 4th of December they reached Smorgoni, a few miles from the capital.

**Unparalleled Cold.**

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On that day Napoleon, who, ever since Smolensk, had looked terribly depressed, collected his lieutenants and informed them of the grave decision which he had had in mind for the last six days. He produced the despatches which he had received from France at Dorogobezh and had thrust into his pocket. In them he was informed that on the 22nd of October Malet, a virtually unknown General, had escaped from prison in Paris and almost overthrown the imperial régime. We shall return to the details of this astounding event;

**Bad News from Paris.**

only a few of them reached Napoleon's ears on the march. They all confirmed the impression made upon him by the first despatch, and proved the incapacity of his Ministers, the untrustworthiness of certain people on whose loyalty he relied, and the morbid state of public opinion. He had managed to keep this terrifying news to himself, his first thought being to secure the safety of the army between Smolensk and Vilna. This he felt he had accomplished, and was of opinion that it had less need of him than his Empire, in which he saw sinister cracks appearing. It was imperative for him to leave for Paris with the utmost secrecy. He would inspire fresh life and courage there, which would reassure his allies; he would raise new armies and prepare his revenge. "In the present state of affairs," he had observed to Caulaincourt a few days previously, "I can impress Europe only from the Palace of the Tuileries!" And this was what he repeated to his lieutenants. They all agreed. The whole army also approved; it certainly never felt the indignation which certain historians—first and foremost among them, Thiers—quite gratuitously attribute to it. "His action was only natural," wrote Sergeant Bourgogne quite simply; and that brave soldier, Captain Bertrand, declared that

**Napoleon Decides to Return.**

## THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

"calumny" alone lent credence to this myth of indignation in the rank and file.

Indeed, on looking back, it is difficult not to agree that the Emperor was right. The only mistake he made was to hand over the command to Murat, who, though he had always been valiant, had never known how to lead an army. Moreover, the misfortunes of the last few months had demoralised him more than any of the others and almost sent him off his head. Apparently, Napoleon was aware of all this; and yet he chose him in preference

**Murat put  
in Command.** to a man like Davout, or Berthier, "because he was a King"—and his own brother-in-law, which in itself, he considered, lent him sufficient glamour to take command. Moreover, he left him Berthier as his Chief of Staff, which set his mind at rest; but he had failed to take into consideration that the Prince of Neufchâtel himself had never been anything more than a brilliant executant, a precious instrument in the hands of a great leader, but a man who, confronted by Murat's indecision, would become as unreliable as he was. Moreover, the Emperor would have argued, the retreat was over; it was an easy task to hold the Russian armies, who had also been sorely tried, along what he regarded as an extremely strong line, for the French front was to stretch from Pinsk to Mitau, with Vilna as its centre.

On the 5th of December he bade farewell to Murat, Eugene and the Marshals, clasping them in his arms with an emotion which was certainly not feigned. He then jumped into a sledge with Caulaincourt beside him, and, followed by two others carrying three more companions, quickly disappeared in a snowstorm.

But Murat was destined to lose all that remained of the army; he abandoned Vilna without making the slightest attempt to defend it, and by losing that town sacrificed the whole line along which Napoleon had arranged to make a stand. Thus he gave the lamentable retreat a still more lamentable sequel by prolonging it amid anarchy and disorder, and after a heart-rending scene of which the Marshals were the sad and indignant witnesses, he deserted his post and fled to Naples, leaving to Eugene the command which the Emperor had confided to himself. It was Eugene who led back across the Niemen, the passage of which was not even

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

disputed, the miserable remnants of that army which at Smorgoni the Emperor imagined had reached the end of its terrible adventure. On the evening of the day they crossed the river, Berthier, writing to the Emperor in the depths of gloom and despair, was able truthfully to declare: "There is no longer any army!" The catastrophe was complete!

### **The End of the Army.**

SOURCES. *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XXII and XXIII). Lecestre, *Lettres inédites* (II). King Jerome, *Mémoires et Correspondance*. Méjan, *Lettres*. Abbé Surugne (priest in Moscow), Letters published by Léon Mirot. Fézensac *Journal de campagne*. Clausewitz, *Der Feldzug von 1812*. Jomini, *Campagnes de 1812 et 1813*. Memoirs and Reminiscences by Ségur, Chlapowski, General Van Vlijmen, Captain Rattier, Captain Bertrand, Sergeant Bourgogne, Gourgaud, Villemain (*Souvenirs contemporains*, I), and Caulaincourt.

WORKS. Those already mentioned by Vandal (III), Sorel (VII), Masson (VII), Driault (IV), Gautier (*Madame de Staël*), Morvan (*Soldat*, II), and Pingaud (*Bernadotte*). Mansuy, *Jérôme Napoléon et la Pologne*. Bertin, *Campagne de 1812*. Baron de Baye, *Borodino*. Denniée, *Itinéraire de Napoléon pendant la campagne de 1812*. Ternaux Compans, *Le général Compans*.

## CHAPTER XLIII

### HUGE CRACKS IN THE EDIFICE

Napoleon returns to the Tuileries. Talleyrand the centre of intrigue. Malet's conspiracy; its consequences. The XXIXth Bulletin. Napoleon upbraids his Ministers and dismisses Frochot; he meditates associating his son with him in the Empire. Spain; Arapiles. Europe after the Russian disaster. Prussia ready to turn traitor; Austria bides her time. Metternich's plan. He aims at complicating matters for the Empire. Bubna in Paris. He finds order restored. Napoleon learns of the destruction of the army after Vilna. Defection of the Prussian corps under York. Prussia disclaims responsibility for it. Napoleon still believes in Austria. He contrives to accumulate fresh resources. Metternich, authorised by Napoleon to interpose, encourages Prussia to break with France. Schwarzenberg's equivocal attitude arouses Napoleon's suspicions. He organises his new army. He would like to have the support of the nation; the masses still loyal; the bourgeoisie beginning to lose faith. Development of Talleyrand's intrigue; demoralisation of the imperial world. The Emperor wishes to have the Empress and the King of Rome crowned by the Pope. The Fontainebleau interviews; the Concordat of 1813; the Pope disavows it. Metternich pursues his aim; he negotiates with the Allies. Prussia's defection. Austria in agreement with the Allies. Spain in chaos. Murat prepares to turn traitor. Napoleon confers the Regency on Marie Louise and takes his departure for the army.

**O**N the 18th of December, 1812, a carriage which had raced hell for leather along the roads, deposited the Emperor at the Tuileries. He had rushed without stopping across Poland and Germany, and arrived, like a bolt from the blue, in Paris. He had sent one of his aides-de-camp ahead to deliver the 29th Bulletin, in which, without in any way disguising the disaster, he attributed it entirely, since his armies had never been defeated, to the terrible inclemency of the weather. But he insisted that the news of his arrival should follow twenty-four hours after the publication of this terrible Bulletin. Public opinion, which he knew was in a ferment and which the Bulletin would fill with consternation, would, he believed, immediately be reassured.

For the last five months France had been living in a state of suspense; at first it merely amounted to vague fear, but after the



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

burning of Moscow it turned to cruel anxiety, and there were signs of unrest in various quarters. Yet the old parties did not seem to be raising their heads again. Ever since 1810 the Royalist party seemed to have been extinct. When in September, 1812, the Comte de Boisselin suggested to Aimée de Coigny the possibility of seeing Louis XVIII return, she had burst out laughing,

**Royalist Intrigues.** thinking he was joking. The real danger, however, lay in the intrigues which were being hatched even in the close proximity of the Tuileries, and which, as we shall presently see, might have far-reaching results. The most important plot was centred in Talleyrand. Irrevocably hostile to the Emperor, and his hostility now being an open secret, he was besieged on all sides by those who, finding they could no longer openly attack the régime, did not despair of undermining it. As a matter of fact, the Prince of Benevento had proved somewhat of a disappointment to little Aimée de Coigny, who on sounding his intentions had discovered that he was quite ready to compass the fall of the Emperor ("Now is the time to overthrow him"!), but was inclined to turn for support, not to the Royalists, but to the Emperor's adversaries in the Senate, who were regarded as being vaguely republican, and even to a certain extent "regicides." Others had the same idea and it is quite possible that, from Garat to Sieyès, the "liberal" Senators were discreetly encouraging the hopes which various parties were reposing in them.

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Striking proof of the existence of these hopes is to be found in an event which, in the month of October, 1812, while the Emperor was still in Moscow, came as a great shock to the public. I refer

**Malet's Conspiracy.** to the famous Malet conspiracy. It would be interesting to go into the details of it, which would provide lively reading, but I have no space to do so in the present volume. I must, however, deal with it quite briefly, for, in addition to its consequences, which were far more important than the actual conspiracy itself, the facts connected with it throw light on the attitude of the men whom Napoleon had left in charge of the Government.

General Malet was a semi-demented creature who, for the last

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six years, had been dreaming of overthrowing the régime "with a flourish of trumpets," so to speak. In 1808, it will be remembered, he had made an attempt to realise his dream, with the result that he had been cast into prison. Although Fouché attached but little importance to this "maniac," he had kept him under lock and key. Savary, who was not so cautious, had allowed him to be transferred to a "sanatorium" where very little supervision was exercised over him. It was the same place in which the two Polignacs and the Marquis de Puyvert, who were dangerous Royalists, had also, by an act of clemency, been allowed to be interned, as well as a certain Abbé Lafon, a fanatic, who had been arrested for having tried to create religious disaffection in connection with Pius VII's captivity. Malet, though of aristocratic descent, was a soldier of the Revolution, and was even regarded as being a Jacobin; but intercourse with his fellow-prisoners had undoubtedly wrought a change in him and had made him conceive the idea of getting all who were hostile, or even discontented, to join in bringing about the fall of the despot.

Malet's plan had always been the same. During the Emperor's absence on campaign the rumour of his death was to be suddenly circulated and during the consequent confusion the Government was to be overthrown. The idea, which was simplicity itself, seemed ludicrous when sponsored by so insignificant a personage, and yet it came within an ace of succeeding. On the overthrow of the imperial Government a provisional Government was to be set up which would summon France to choose her own régime.

In 1812 Malet hoped to escape from his sanatorium, where supervision was extremely slack, and convince certain persons, both soldiers and civilians, of the Emperor's death, which at this juncture, when everybody's nerves were on edge, would all the more readily gain credence; he would then prevail upon bodies of troops who had been taken in to lend him their armed support, and would arrest some of the Ministers—first and foremost the Minister of Police and the Minister for War, who had their hands on the lever of government, so to speak—intimidate the rest, and having himself seized the military government of Paris, set up *manu militari* his provisional Government. As the forged despatch announcing the Emperor's death might not prove sufficient to

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

remove all doubt and destroy all loyalty, one of his first actions would be to produce a false *senatus consultum*, supposed to have been passed by the Senate on receipt of the news, proclaiming the fall of Napoleon and delegating the Government to Malet and other more important personages.

But it was necessary for him to have collaborators from the outset. Two Generals who had served under the Republic—Lahorie, who had at one time been Moreau's Chief of Staff, and Guidal, an old Jacobin soldier who had been compromised in the Royalist plots in the south—were at that time incarcerated in La Force prison. Malet's first step was to be the release of these two men, to whom he would tell his tale and then use them for the overthrow of the imperial Government which they detested. Lahorie, at the head of the troops who had been lured over, was to go and arrest the Prefect of Police, and Guidal the Minister for War and then the Arch-Chancellor, while Malet, with supreme audacity, reserved for himself the task of overthrowing the Governor of Paris, that rugged veteran, General Hulin.

What régime precisely did Malet intend to set up on the fall of the Empire? The throne of the Bourbons, is Frédéric Masson's somewhat rash reply. But it is impossible to say. The forged *senatus consultum* was to appoint a provisional Government in which, under the purely fictitious presidency of Moreau, more Republicans than Royalists were to have seats. It has always been a moot point whether some of the great personages who just missed being involved in the conspiracy were not aware of it. And it is interesting to call to mind that the names of those senators whom, at the time, Talleyrand mentioned—to Aimée de Coigny, for instance—as being likely to support a movement to compass the fall of Napoleon, also appeared on Malet's list, and that, moreover, less than two years later, they all voted "for the fall."

Be this as it may, on the evening of the 22nd of October, 1812, Malet left his sanatorium, got into uniform, and presenting himself at Popincourt Barracks, informed Soulier, who was in command of the 10th cohort, that the Emperor was dead, which apparently came as a great shock to that worthy man. He also read him the forged

**Malet's  
Escape.**

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*senatus consultum*, and in his capacity as the new Governor of Paris, ordered him to place his cohort under arms. Astounding as it may seem, Soulier immediately complied, and at six o'clock in the morning Malet left the barracks at the head of five companies of the National Guard and marched out to liberate Lahorie and Guidal, whom he entrusted with the task of arresting the Ministers. As he required other troops in addition to the National Guard, Malet, still posing as the "Governor," ordered Colonel Rabbe, who was in command of the Paris Guard, to march them to the Hôtel de Ville and set up the "provisional Government" there by force of arms. Lahorie and Guidal made their way to the Prefecture of Police and arrested the bewildered Baron Pasquier. Lahorie then repaired to the Ministry of Police, where the Duc de Rovigo, to his great amazement, found himself put under arrest just as he was getting out of bed; Lahorie installed

**Savary**  
**Arrested.** himself in his office and began making arrangements for circulating the news of this revolution

in the provinces. Guidal was less expeditious; frightened at the thought of going to arrest General Clarke at the Ministry of War, he merely offered to imprison Savary, together with Desmarest, the head of the Sûreté, and Pasquier, the Prefect of Police, and did actually conduct all three men to La Force. Lahorie then left

the Ministry of Police for a moment to go to the

**Pasquier**  
**Imprisoned.** Hôtel de Ville, where he expected to see the "provisional Government" already installed. But he merely found that a hall had been prepared for it. Malet had sent General Soulier there, completely mystified, to invite Frochot, the Prefect, to "install" the new Government, and altogether fantastic as it may seem, this high functionary, on being informed, like the others, of the "the Emperor's death" and the "vote of the Senate," had immediately, without asking for further information, prepared the hall. Moreover, Colonel Rabbe, equally mystified, was also bringing up his troops. Everything seemed to be miraculously working in favour of the fantastic designs of a semi-lunatic.

It was Malet himself who spoilt the game. Going to the Place Vendôme, where the military Government was established, he insisted on being ushered into General Hulin, to whom he communicated his famous "news." As the latter seemed incredulous

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lous, Malet drew a pistol from his pocket, fired on him and laid him low. Installing himself at his desk, he sent **Hulln Shot.** for Doucet, the Chief of Staff, who was also on the point of humbly doing his bidding, when Captain Laborde, the First Adjutant, an alert and energetic soldier, who scented the fraud, arrived. Together with Doucet, he rushed to the desk where Malet was sitting; they both sprang **Malet Seized.** upon him, seized him by the throat, and binding him hand and foot, shut him up. While Doucet informed Cambacérès of what had taken place, Laborde hastened to the Ministry of Police, arrested Lahorie and took him to La Force, where he liberated Pasquier and Savary, who were even more crestfallen than angry. In the meantime Colonel Rabbe had been arrested at the Hôtel de Ville, and Frochot, the Prefect, extremely upset by the whole affair, was putting things straight again.

By midday it was all over! Cambacérès summoned a meeting of Ministers, whose fury knew no bounds. Clarke and, above all, Savary wished to have everybody arrested. But the very next day investigations revealed the truth regarding the "great conspiracy" which the Duc de Rovigo fancied he saw in this mad venture; it had indeed been the work of an unbalanced fanatic, favoured by the prodigious credulity or pusillanimity of wretched creatures who were to pay heavily for their mistake. On the 23rd a court martial met which condemned to death not only Malet, Lahorie and Guidal, but also eleven "accomplices," including Rabbe and Soulier, who had been merely dupes. As a matter of fact, Malet, at the trial, gave a very fine reply. "Have you any accomplices?" the President asked him. "France and you yourself, sir—if I had succeeded!" was his retort, which showed considerable profundity. Moreover, his behaviour on the scaffold was extremely fine. "I have fallen," **Malet Executed.** he exclaimed, "but I am not the last of the Romans!" If he was mad, it must be admitted that he was a madman not lacking in dignity.

The whole affair had been supremely foolish, but it produced a disastrous impression. The Royalist party forthwith redoubled its efforts with Talleyrand. As a matter of fact, that gentleman did not respond. He mistrusted the Bourbons; as yet they had

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made him no promise, and, in any case, he was not one to be content with words. All the same, he felt that events augured ill—or well. "It is the beginning of the end!" he exclaimed, on reading the 29th Bulletin.

The news of this prodigious hoax, which reached Napoleon in Russia, was, as he himself confessed, a terrible shock, which the knowledge of full details merely served to increase. **Napoleon's Indignation.** True, he declared, the plot had apparently existed only in the brains of a few lunatics; but the weakness of Savary "arrested in bed and taken to La Force!" the ineptitude of the wise and prudent Pasquier! the stupidity of brave soldiers like Rabbe and Soulier! the indescribable behaviour of Frochot! "Not one of them thought of my son!" he observed to Caulaincourt. "The idea of the King of Rome never once entered Frochot's mind!" And he was still extremely troubled and distressed when he reached Paris.

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On the 19th of December he summoned the Council. The Ministers arrived trembling in their shoes. He went straight to the point. "What about the King of Rome? What about your oaths? You make me shudder for the future!" None of the Ministers had actually broken his oath, but he wished to put the fear of God into them.

Frochot was made the scapegoat for them all, though it pained the Emperor; for his model Prefect had been one of the most valuable assistants he had ever had. **Frochot Disgraced.** But the scandal had been too serious. He submitted the matter to the Council of State, who decided that it would be sufficient for Frochot to be dismissed from office. The Emperor asked for nothing more.

But he was anxious to secure signal manifestations of loyalty, and his first step was to receive the Senate. Lacépède, the mouth-piece of the Assembly, was told to arrange for an important political operation; for Napoleon was determined that in the future "the King of Rome should be remembered," and to ensure this "he would associate him with the Empire." But he wished the demand for it to be formulated, and this Lacépède proceeded

**Napoleon's Plan for His Son.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

to do in the most pompous terms. The Emperor replied that he would think it over. As a matter of fact, he was meditating having the Empress and the King of Rome crowned, more particularly as it was clear to him that the Russian venture was merely the beginning of an extremely grave crisis. Europe would certainly rise up against him.

England, who was struggling in the throes of a terrible economic crisis and, at the beginning of 1812, had seemed on the point of succumbing, had naturally plucked up courage again after the Russian disaster, though, in any case, the events that had been taking place in Spain since the spring would have been sufficient to put fresh hope into her. Everything was still going from bad to worse for the French in that country. We should have to enter into detail to understand a situation which baffled even the best-informed, and still baffles the historian. Five magnificent armies, made up of the

**England's Plight.** best soldiers in Europe, were carrying on the war there in a state of the utmost confusion. Their leaders refused to obey King Joseph, who, embittered by their behaviour, often seemed at his wits' end, while Wellington's little army, profiting by the state of anarchy, was holding its own against these magnificent troops which for the last ten years had proved victorious against all the armies of Europe.

**Anarchy in Spain.** In the summer of 1812, Wellington decided to attack Marmont's army—the old "Army of Portugal"—which was holding Old Castille. And he hurled himself on Salamanca on the 28th of June. But as Marmont stood firm, Wellington, ever cautious, fell back. The Duke of Ragusa then tried to cut him off from Ciudad Rodrigo and, indeed, almost surrounded him at Arapiles, on the 21st of July; but the battle, which had opened badly, developed in such a way that, far from carrying out the intention of the Marshal, who had been seriously wounded, Clausel, who had taken over command, was obliged, in his turn, to fall back, leaving the enemy free to hurl himself on Castille. Joseph took fright, and, in one of the fits of panic to which he was subject, abandoned Madrid, on the 15th of August, and retired to Valencia, which was fortunately securely held by Suchet, the best of the French Generals in Spain.

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But the inevitable consequence of this was the evacuation of Andalusia; the order to carry it out was given to Soult, who for months past had been showing but scant regard for the King's authority, and now gave vent to his fury at all this tergiversation. He wrote to Paris declaring that Joseph was guilty of treachery. The letter was intercepted and taken to the King, whom it infuriated. Obligated to join the outraged monarch in Valencia, Soult adopted an extremely haughty tone with him. Joseph did not dare to demand his recall, for the Duke of Dalmatia was one of the three or four Marshals whose undoubted valour gave them the right to dub themselves "Napoleon's lieutenants." A fresh plan of campaign was accordingly decided upon in which all the armies were to collaborate. Wellington, who had entered Madrid on the 18th of August, learned that Marmont's army, now under Clausel, had again taken the offensive; he accordingly left the capital, fell upon Burgos and drove Clausel back to the Ebro, but was unable to take the town, which was stoutly defended. He was wearing himself out against it when he was informed that two armies were marching against him. The English, menaced in Madrid itself, were now, in their turn, obliged to evacuate the capital, and on the 2nd of November, Joseph returned there, amid the not altogether insincere acclamations of the people, whom three months of English rule had been quite sufficient to disabuse. The King himself seemed to have improved under the ordeal and was anxious for a vigorous offensive to be made against the English. Indeed, it seemed that Wellington was at last on the point of being crushed. Joseph had 90,000 men, Wellington only 70,000. On November 13th Soult again caught the latter at Arapiles and urged the so-called Army of Portugal—the command of which had again changed hands, Souham having taken the place of Clausel—to cut off the retreat of the English, who had been repulsed. The manœuvre was badly executed, and while Jourdan, Joseph's Major-General, and the embittered Soult were engaged in discussion, the enemy slipped away. But, for the fourth time, he returned, and on this occasion it meant disaster for the French. Splendid opportunities always lost! This was what happened again and again in Spain. It was an endless nightmare!



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

It gave England fresh confidence, but she derived even greater encouragement from the situation created in Europe by the Russian disaster.

The Russians, too, were exultant, intoxicated with pride, and none more so than their ruler, the Tsar Alexander. **Russia's Jubilation.** This strange man had been so deeply stirred by recent events that he was in a sort of seventh heaven of mystic exultation. God was on his side; he had merely been the instrument of the Almighty; but Heaven was waiting for him to complete his task—the overthrow of Antichrist! This illuminism, which was destined one day to burst forth in the strangest manner, was accompanied by a kind of vague internationalism. He was the king of kings, the chosen saviour of Europe whom he was, not only to liberate, but also to reorganise. The grandson of Catherine II, however, still remained a Russian, fully determined to derive from the situation all the profit he possibly could for the Empire of the Tsars. For the moment he felt there was only one prize within his grasp, though, as we know, he had long had his eye upon it—the restoration, under the sceptre of a Romanoff, of the whole of the old Kingdom of Poland, from Vilna, which he had won back, to Warsaw, Posen and Cracow. But Posen and Warsaw had, before 1806, belonged to Prussia, and Cracow, before 1809, to Austria. And if, as he hoped they would do, these Powers were to desert the cause of France and join him, they would claim their ancient possessions. To be in a position to refuse them he would have to promise them ample compensation. Where could he find this except by pilfering the Napoleonic Empire?

### **The Tsar's Plans.**

But this Empire had merely been wounded, and still remained intact; in order to despoil it for the benefit of his allies he would have to lay it low. Thus the Tsar was brought to regard the complete ruin of Napoleon as a desirable object. The interests of his Empire were, in this respect, at one with his mystic inspirations and his rôle of liberator.

And, indeed, Europe, in December, 1812, still seemed to be hesitating. The King of Prussia, as may well be imagined, was itching to fall on the French while they were at sixes and sevens. The Tsar, reminding him of his recent promises, was inviting and even urging

### **Prussia's Duplicity.**

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him to do so. Moreover, the whole of Germany, from the Vistula to the Rhine, was quivering with impatience to rend the wounded lion, and the Prussian people, above all, were only awaiting the signal from Berlin in order to fall upon him. But Frederick William was afraid! His army, even with the additions due to the surreptitious activities carried on since 1807, could, not for the moment, muster more than 50,000 to 60,000 men, and his best corps, under York, was still engaged with the French armies; his country, including its strongholds and even its capital, was in French occupation; moreover, the whole of the French army, the condition of which was not yet known, would surge back through northern Germany on its retreat from Russia. Hardenberg himself was of opinion that for Prussia to break with Napoleon at this juncture would be suicidal. Doubtless it might be possible secretly to support the "good cause," but even then it could only be on the understanding that this dangerous game would

### **Prussia and the Tsar.**

secure ample recompense in the future. But it had already transpired that, as soon as the victory was complete, Russia intended to appropriate to herself the territory once filched by Frederick the Great from the Kingdom of Poland, and that the grandson of Catherine meant to occupy it. It was necessary to find out the latter's attitude on this subject, and General von Knessebeck was sent to him. Meanwhile protestations of loyalty to Napoleon were redoubled. They were apparently so heartfelt that Saint-Marsan, the French Minister, was completely taken in. The King, he wrote, had opened his heart to him with all his characteristic frankness and loyalty. And yet, at this very moment, when Hardenberg was asking his Sovereign point-blank: "Why should we not crush the French on their retreat?" the King merely replied that they must find out what Austria's intentions were as well as the attitude of the Tsar.

Austria was in a different position from Prussia. In her heart of hearts, she was no more loyal than the latter to the alliance she had made with France in April. The first news of the retreat had filled her with secret jubilation. But Napoleon checked was not Napoleon defeated; for Vienna knew from experience that, with that "devil of a Bonaparte," Wagram might follow swiftly on the heels of Essling. Even when the disaster was complete,

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Metternich still exercised the greatest circumspection, though he was busy making careful arrangements which would enable him skilfully to play his illustrious **Metternich's** **Caution.** "ally" false without compromising himself in his eyes for some considerable period. He would offer to act as intermediary between Russia and France, publicly proclaiming in Paris that his sole aim was to do the best for the Emperor Napoleon. As soon as this "intervention" had been agreed to, he would see that it developed into "mediation"; and "mediation," he would contend, could be efficacious only if Austria recovered her independence and did so on Napoleon's own authority. He would then be in a position to conduct the mediation in accordance with his own policy, which was to aim at confronting Napoleon with demands the latter would end by refusing. This would be the moment for him to declare that the Emperor had rejected his mediation, and Austria would be able to join the coalition, which he had meanwhile secretly helped to form.

The Austrian Chancellor had lost no time; as early as the 4th of November, 1812, Floret, the Austrian *chargé d'affaires* with Maret, who was still at Vilna, had received instructions to offer the intervention of Austria.

It was only on the 12th of December that the full extent of the Russian disaster became known in Vienna; the news was greeted by an indecent outburst of joy alike in influential political and military circles. But **Vienna** **Jubilant.** Metternich confined himself to offering Otto, the French Ambassador, his condolences and assuring him of his friendship, which showed no sign of wavering. Just at this juncture Francis II received a letter from his son-in-law. It had been despatched during the fantastic journey from Vilna to Paris and in it Napoleon, attributing the cruel losses he had suffered to the exceptional cold, announced that in the spring he would have a new and formidable army in the field and secure his revenge by means of a brilliant victory. And he asked his ally, Austria, to make a special effort on her side and raise her auxiliary force from 30,000 to 60,000 men. Metternich was not displeased; the request paved the way for negotiations. He decided to entrust the task to General Bubna, who was forthwith despatched to

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France with the object of securing Napoleon's authorisation or, better still, his request for Austria's intervention.

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**Bubna in Paris.** Bubna arrived in Paris to find the Emperor once more so serene and reassured that he was completely taken aback. True, the 29th Bulletin had given rise to profound perturbation, first in Paris and then in the rest of France and throughout the Empire. Some were prostrate with grief, others were filled with violent indignation. But, as the Emperor had foreseen, the news of his return to the Tuileries, following so close on the heels of the publication of the terrifying Bulletin, had immediately restored the public morale and, in any case, put a stop to any outburst of fury. Aimée de Coigny, on hearing that the Emperor had "jumped out of his post-chaise on to his throne," was, "for a moment desperate." For the time being she ceased to pay her usual visits to Talleyrand, who, for his part, no longer talked, as he had done a month previously, of "overthrowing the great man." And a few weeks later, the Emperor's adversaries were forced to confess that "indignation had died down and that the Russian campaign was almost completely forgotten."

**Effect of the 29th Bulletin.** In the "new departments" the effect produced by the 29th Bulletin had, as a matter of fact, been more serious than in Old France, since their inhabitants had, for a moment, seen some hope of "liberation." But, after a short period of unrest, the whole Empire, even the districts but lately annexed, appeared to calm down and the Emperor, who, in Paris, was of opinion that the "terrible bulletin" had given rise to "grief rather than discouragement," seemed completely reassured. He would call upon the whole of his Empire to prepare for revenge and would have no difficulty in obtaining from it the forces necessary for making his victory brilliant and decisive.

Moreover, in December, Napoleon was still counting on what he imagined to be the considerable forces which he had left on the way to Vilna, where he was convinced they would be able to hold their own. He had therefore contented himself with ordering the levy of the 1813 class, which would

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provide him with 140,000 men, and further decided to incorporate whole cohorts of the National Guard in the army, which would give him another 100,000. Together with some 120,000 combatants, whom he still believed he possessed in Lithuania, these 240,000 fresh men were to constitute the army of revenge. But it was not long before he learnt that, through Murat's fault, the disaster had been prolonged and even intensified, after his departure, and that he now had the mere remnants of an army retreating between the Niemen and the Vistula, at most 30,000 men. He immediately faced the necessity of increasing the army he was raising by recalling 100,000 young men of the 1809-1812 classes to the colours; lastly the 1814 class—a reserve of 115,000 conscripts—would, in March, relieve the 1813 class in the depots.

The fact of the matter was that he was now almost certain that he would have to fight not only the Russian army, but the combined forces of a formidable coalition.

The defection of Prussia was now well-nigh a foregone conclusion. The signal had already been given by York's corps which had been placed under the supreme command of Macdonald. The Prussian General, following Macdonald in his retreat from Courland into East Prussia, had purposely lagged behind and got into touch with the Russians, to whom he surrendered on the 30th of December, 1812, by the Convention of Tauroggen. Schwarzenberg, on the other wing of the Russian armies, showed greater subtlety. He forced the troops under Reynier and Poniatowski to follow him in a retreat in which no fighting took place and discouraged any attempt at resistance. Shortly afterwards he surrendered Warsaw and, together with all the forces under his command, dragged the bewildered

**Warsaw  
Surrendered.**

Ministers of the Grand Duchy in the direction of Galicia. York doubtless hoped that his action would lead to a rupture between Prussia and Napoleon, but Schwarzenberg contented himself with paving the way for what Metternich called "the transition."

True, as soon as he heard of York's defection, the King of Prussia poured out torrents of grief and indignation to the French Minister, followed by letters expressing similar sentiments of sorrow and regret to the imperial Government. But he was

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already informing the Tsar that he was prepared to enter into negotiations with him.

Napoleon did not allow himself to be taken in and now regarded Prussia as an enemy waiting to pounce upon him at the first opportunity. He did not see so clearly through Metternich's policy, which was, indeed, far more skilful. And it was furthered by Napoleon's still firm conviction that the father of Marie Louise would never declare war upon him or run the risk of compromising the King of Rome's future by so doing. Until the very entry of Austria into the conflict, this remained one of his most firmly rooted illusions and proved extraordinarily favourable

**Napoleon's  
Faith in  
Austria.**

to Metternich's manoeuvres. For the time being he was convinced that, far from finding an enemy in Austria, his marriage would make her a staunch ally; and he acted accordingly. It was for this reason that he readily acquiesced in the idea of Austria's "intervention" with the Tsar for the purpose of paving the way to peace. Now, as we know, the sole aim of Metternich's policy

**Metternich's  
Policy.**

was to involve Napoleon in a series of concessions which would have meant his relinquishing three-quarters of the French Empire. Meanwhile, in the event of Napoleon refusing to be persuaded into thus despoiling himself, he was arranging for the Austrian forces to join the Coalition armies.

Bubna arrived in Paris entrusted with the task of paving the way for this astute and delicate operation. The Emperor

**Napoleon  
and Bubna.**

received him on the 31st of December, 1812, with the utmost cordiality, and after describing the formidable resources that still remained at his command, exclaimed: "Let us make peace; I ask for nothing better than for your Emperor to give Russia a good talking to," but, his tongue outrunning his intention, he unfortunately added, "I am delighted that he has consented to act as mediator."

Possibly the calm assurance of Bubna's attitude opened his eyes, or was it that the news from Prussia had sufficed to perturb him? Be this as it may, as early as the beginning of January, 1813, he turned to the consideration of measures destined to provide him with a formidable army, which he always regarded as the

**Napoleon  
Becomes  
Suspicious.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

*ultima ratio regum.* And it was in no vainglorious spirit that he assured Bubna that before three months had passed he would have 400,000 men under arms. For he was inaugurating a whole series of important military and financial measures for which he would have no difficulty in obtaining the sanction of the ever-obsequious Senate.

And, indeed, the latter raised no difficulties about passing them; the crux of the matter lay, not in the vote of the Senate, but in the statement which, in order to obtain the assent of the

**Maret's  
Statement  
in the Senate.** Assembly, the Emperor had ordered Maret to read from the rostrum of the Luxembourg. In it Napoleon declared his desire "to adhere to a system of pacification" and made public his intention to accept, with this object in view, "the intervention of Austria." But he categorically declared that "none of the countries joined by constitutional ties to the Empire could be the object of negotiations"—which, to use Talleyrand's expression, reduced the "bases of barter" to a negligible quantity. As, moreover, the Emperor also announced that the French dynasty would continue to hold sway in Spain and that he would concede nothing in Italy, the "bases of barter" were still further restricted.

Meanwhile, Metternich was anxious for these negotiations to be opened, though he intended to prolong them in order to give himself time to weave his web of treachery, so to speak. In any case, he wished Prussia to consummate her act of betrayal, and when Knesebeck was sent from Berlin to Vienna in order to sound

**Metternich  
and Prussia.** his intentions, he had no hesitation in encouraging the defection of the Prussian Government by revealing part of his own plan to its envoy. He told him he expected there would be four stages to be passed through—or, to use his own expression, "four steps" to be taken. The first, for Austria, was the recovery of her own independence; the second was to secure acceptance of her offer of mediation; the third to establish, in conjunction with the Russians, the "bases of a lasting peace." Regarding the fourth, which was obviously the transfer of the Austrian army to the side of the Coalition, "the Austrian Government," wrote Knesebeck, "apparently does not as yet wish to make any explicit statement." But,

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as far as Prussia was concerned, Metternich was prepared to regard her abandonment of the French alliance for that of Russia with a favourable eye, and from this Knesebeck drew the perfectly logical conclusion that Austria was preparing, in good time, for her own defection and adhesion to the Coalition, "for, without some such ulterior motive," he observed, "it would be absurd to lend support to the other side."

Prussia had no need of this encouragement. The King and Hardenberg had quite made up their minds to turn against Napoleon. The latter, as I have already observed, saw pretty clearly through Prussia's mask, but he would have preferred her not to cast it off too soon. He hoped she would keep it on until such time as he was in a position to march to the Elbe with his 400,000 men to bridle and, if necessary, break this dubious ally. But he was beginning to grow disquieted about Vienna, and no longer trusting Otto, he replaced him by the

**Narbonne  
Sent to  
Vienna.**

Comte de Narbonne, one of the men whose shrewdness he valued most highly. For it was imperative to see through the game which Metternich was

now actively pursuing. It was acting on his orders that Schwarzenberg had just surrendered Warsaw to the Russians. "Its capture," wrote Sir Robert Wilson, the British attaché to the Russian General Staff, "was entirely due to diplomacy." And now the Austrian Marshal, deaf to the appeals of Prince Eugene, refused point-blank to join the French army at Kalisch

**Schwarzen-  
berg's  
Treachery.**

and was treacherously leading his corps, together with all the French troops attached to it, towards the Austrian frontier. This was what first made

Napoleon begin to doubt Austria's loyalty, and, in Bubna's presence, he roundly denounced the Marshal's behaviour; the veil seemed to be falling from his eyes. "It is the first step towards defection," he exclaimed. "You have changed your plans. . . . You wish to take your corps away. . . . I have accepted your intervention in the cause of peace, but an armed mediator does not suit me." Meanwhile, Metternich was getting into touch with Russia, and had sent Lebzeltern to Russian Headquarters to find out the Tsar's conditions for laying down arms.

But Napoleon's last interview with Bubna had made him mistrust Metternich's activities and he was furbishing up his



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

weapons. He reinforced Eugene's army between the Vistula and the Oder, raising it to 80,000 men; Ney's first corps was to be on the Elbe before the middle of March, Marmont's second corps before the middle of April, while General Bertrand, in Italy, was forming a new corps of 50,000 men who were to cross the Alps and descend into Bavaria at the same time as Napoleon, placing himself at the head of the army, debouched into Saxony. The artillery was being renewed; as early as January, 1813, 600 new guns had already been turned out of the arsenals. The great difficulty was to create another fine body of cavalry; it would hardly be possible to do so before the summer and, as we shall see, the lack of it was to make itself cruelly felt in the spring campaign.

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The Emperor was anxious that this material force should be supported by moral force. "The French will do whatever I wish," he had observed to one of the Prussian emissaries. But he would have liked something more than this; he would have liked the whole nation with one spontaneous impulse to group itself behind him. But twelve years of autocratic rule had to a large extent unfitted the country for "spontaneous impulses." And Napoleon decided to provoke demonstrations. "The Government," wrote a certain ex-Prefect, "had recourse to the obsolete method of addresses." The towns and departments "offered"—this was the official formula—regiments. Such demonstrations of loyalty and patriotism were somewhat forced, seeing that Hamburg and Rome, where public opinion was extremely hostile, joined in under pressure from the Prefects. The Emperor, moreover, anxious not to alarm public opinion, was determined not to let it be imagined that the country, during those first months of 1813, was in danger; the addresses accordingly asserted with monotonous regularity that the nation "relied entirely on the genius of the Emperor."

All the same, there is no documentary evidence of the alleged "profound disaffection" among the masses. This "disaffection" is a mere historical convention. The 1813 conscripts, no doubt, left home depressed and sad, but as soon as they joined their regiments they became

## CRACKS IN THE EDIFICE

imbued with extraordinary enthusiasm for the Emperor. Even in the Rhineland departments the Prefects reported that in view of the new levies moral resistance to conscription was negligible. At most there had been one or two hostile demonstrations in La Vendée; but from cottage to workshop the people were still full of confidence in the Emperor, and their trust retained much of the affection, if not of the enthusiasm of yore.

It was the bourgeoisie who, to a very large extent, were becoming alienated. The chief beneficiaries of the régime, of which,

**The  
Bourgeoisie  
Disaffected.**

as we know, the Emperor had written that he particularly wished "the old Third Estate" to be the bulwark, they had, as a matter of fact, hitherto suffered but little by the war, since they had been able to buy off their sons by paying for substitutes. But the time had now come when they were afraid of seeing even those who had secured substitutes being called to the colours, and they were shaking in their shoes. They naturally pretended to be afraid of something very different. They suddenly remembered that they were Liberals who detested "despotism." But their "Liberalism" was really due to a pusillanimity which was destined to make them play anything but a glorious part in 1814.

None the less there was a general vague feeling of uneasiness throughout the country and the voice of discontent was now occasionally louder than that of devotion. The parties, but lately reduced to impotence, endeavoured to turn this to account, and in the breasts of some of the Royalists hope began to revive.

**Royalist  
Hopes Revive.**

They were to be feared only if they secured the support of the intrigue that was developing under the very roof of the Tuileries.

**Intrigues  
in the  
Tuileries.**

True, the imperial world as a whole was not yet ripe for treachery. But the sad despondency—I wish I had space to describe it—which characterised most of the "servants" of the régime, both soldiers and civilians, was engendering a spirit of bitterness. Some of Joseph's friends were even praying for the Emperor's death, so that their patron might become regent and—at last!—seize the reins of power in France. Talleyrand was one of those who contemplated this possibility. Full of contempt for the Republic, but still mistrustful of the Bourbons, he was, for the time being,

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

in favour of "overthrowing" the Sovereign, but perhaps temporarily preserving the régime. Through the medium of five or six fair and extremely persuasive ladies, however, the Royalists were laying siege to him. The Pretender, when asked to "reassure" the ex-Bishop of Autun, had at first done so only with the utmost reluctance. But in January, 1813, a more serious correspondence was inaugurated, and pending a definite decision to support the King, the Prince of Benevento was doing his best to cut the ground from beneath the Emperor's feet. Even in the Tuileries itself, through the medium of Caulaincourt and Berthier, who were still dazzled by him, he was spreading discouragement and preparing the way to defeat and surrender.

It was this general attitude of discouragement that perturbed the Emperor, even more than possible treachery. Treachery, he felt, would be powerless unless discouragement acted as its unwitting accomplice. And, in every sphere, he combated this depression of mind and spirit.

In order to do so, he made every effort to appear at parades and festivals and in the theatre. He hardly slept, devoting eighteen hours a day to work. Never had this extraordinary man displayed such indefatigable activity. But he was preoccupied by the state of public opinion and wondered how to improve it. Nothing, he felt, would have a more salutary effect than reconciliation with the Pope, which would put an end to a certain amount of uneasiness and assuage the rancour of the Catholics. Moreover, he had need of the Pontiff, for he was still anxious to have the Empress crowned before his departure, and, more important still, the King of Rome, who would thus be "associated with the Empire." And, in his opinion, Papal unction alone could make this consecration the uplifting force he hoped it would be and restore the public spirit.

The Pope, who had been moved from Savona, had been living in close seclusion at Fontainebleau for the last twelve months.

Suddenly, on the 19th of January, 1813, the Emperor arrived with the Empress and informed Pius VII that he had come to pay him a visit. The latter, as we know, had in the early days conceived for Napoleon an extraordinary affection—a combina-

**Talleyrand's  
Attitude.**

**Napoleon's  
Energy.**

**Napoleon  
Reconciled  
with the Pope.**

## CRACKS IN THE EDIFICE

tion of gratitude and admiration which had survived the most terrible vicissitudes. He was deeply moved, and when the Emperor entered his room he held out his arms to him. This served Napoleon's purpose, though he, too, was deeply moved; for, in his heart of hearts, he respected the old man who, for conscience' sake, and with much tribulation, had alone resisted him. This first interview was one of effusive outpourings out of which an understanding seemed likely to develop. Other interviews followed—the Emperor having taken up residence in the Palace. Notwithstanding a myth to which a certain great writer has lent his support, their tone remained simple and cordial, without the Emperor being called upon to play either the “*comediante*” or the “*tragediante*.” Except for one or two points, the agreement that resulted seemed somewhat vague. The Pope at last apparently admitted the prospect of some day taking up his residence at Avignon, on condition that he should not be called upon to make any formal renunciation of his Roman patrimony and that his title and prerogatives as “Bishop of Rome” should be recognised. The basilica of St. Peter was to remain his cathedral, where he “would crown the Emperors.” Meanwhile he declared himself ready to crown Marie Louise and her son in Notre-Dame. The Emperor felt that such a demonstration would be enough to sanction not only his second marriage but also, *de facto* if not *de jure*, the possession of Rome by the Empire—the “King of Rome!” The Concordat, signed on the 25th of January, 1813, settled the other points at issue; above all the

### **The Concordat of 1813.**

solution of the knotty problem of “institution” by means of a simple amendment of the Concordat of 1801, to which Pius VII had already extremely reluctantly given his consent by word of mouth at Savona, was confirmed. The Pope, however, still troubled on this score, insisted on an addendum to the effect that “he gave his consent to these arrangements only out of consideration for the actual state of the Church”—implying some vague idea of revision at a future date. He further insisted that the Concordat should be kept secret until he had had an opportunity of submitting it to the College of Cardinals whom the Emperor had promised should be allowed to meet at Fontainebleau.

Napoleon lost no time in keeping this promise. The Cardinals,

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

nearly all of them exiles, were summoned to Fontainebleau, and Pacca himself, the most implacable of them all, released from imprisonment at Fenestrelle. They reached the Pope in a far from accommodating frame of mind. In vain did Napoleon take the precaution of writing Pius VII a letter in which he formally declared that, in signing the Concordat, the Pope had "neither directly nor indirectly renounced the sovereignty of the Roman States." He all too soon discovered that the unfortunate Pontiff, bombarded by arguments and even cruel reproaches by the

**The Concordat of 1813.** Cardinals, might at any moment disavow his signature. Accordingly, on the 13th of February, 1813, he had the Concordat that had been concluded published in the *Moniteur* and informed the Bishops, who, being for the most part greatly relieved, ordered solemn *Te Deums* to be sung.

The Cardinals, as had been expected, had raised serious objections and even indulged in respectful but lively recriminations.

**The Cardinals Object.** For a month the Pope was a prey to the most agonising perplexity, and at last, on the 24th of

March, decided to inform the Emperor that he found it impossible to carry out their last settlement; having been "forced to the conclusion that the document was ill-advised and badly drawn up," he formally begged for its "revision." The letter did not altogether surprise Napoleon, for police reports had informed him of the assaults made on the Pope's conscience by the Cardinals in general, and Cardinal di Pietro in particular. He immediately had di Pietro arrested and removed to a distance of a hundred miles "as an enemy of the State." The Pope, offended by this arrest, once more sought refuge in silence and inertia. But, from that moment, everything was again in the melting-pot, and it was necessary to abandon the installation of the nominated prelates and the consecration of the King of Rome. "We must let Rome be, for the time being, as well as the institution of the Bishops," observed the Emperor shortly afterwards to Narbonne. "That number has been returned to the urn and will only come out again after a great victory won on the Elbe or the Vistula."

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## CRACKS IN THE EDIFICE

On the 14th of February, 1813, the Emperor opened the session of the Legislative Body with greater pomp and ceremony than usual. He made a speech in which he once again proclaimed his desire for peace, but it was to be peace with "honour." He was prepared to make sacrifices, but before opening negotiations, reduced them, as Maret had just done in the Senate, to—roughly speaking—the losses he had already sustained.

**Napoleon's  
Speech.**

These declarations, while apparently foiling Metternich, as a matter of fact exactly suited his purpose. He now knew what to do. Napoleon might possibly be induced to make further sacrifices, but the time would inevitably come when he would refuse to accede to the demands of the Allies secretly encouraged by the Austrian "intermediary." This would be the moment for "mediation," which Austria would make so favourable to the Coalition that the Great Man would inevitably reject it; Austria would then have the excuse, for which she was waiting, for going over to the enemy's camp, with a great show of sorrow and reluctance. Thiers, like all the contemporary critics, afterwards allowed himself to be strangely deceived about this whole chapter of the wonderful history we are discussing, being misled by the confidences Prince Metternich himself made to him when he was an old man.

**Progress of  
Metternich's  
Plans.**

Meanwhile, as far as Napoleon was concerned, the Austrian Chancellor felt safe in taking his "first step"—that of "intervention." Acting on the observations addressed to Bubna, he sent one agent to the Tsar and another to London, on the ostensible mission of sounding these two allied Powers regarding "their conditions of peace." He was fully determined to encourage rather than restrain them in their demands, and Napoleon already suspected that an attempt was being made gradually to lure him into making ever more substantial concessions. And he was right. Contrary to Thiers' assertion, Europe—the Emperor's wavering allies as well as his declared enemies—was, as early as the month of January, 1812, already aspiring to reduce France, if that were possible, to very little more than her old frontiers of 1791. This has now been established

**Metternich  
Approaches  
Russia and  
England.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

beyond all possibility of doubt. True, Metternich would have liked to avoid having to fight and would have preferred to inveigle the Emperor, by diplomatic methods only, into concession after concession, until the desired result had been reached. He hardly hoped to succeed in this, but was, in any case, determined that, by fair means or foul, the Habsburgs should recover all they had lost since Campo Formio. Prussia, for her part, aimed at the

**The Tsar's  
Aim.**

recovery of the territory filched from her in 1807, or at ample compensation. The Tsar, who wished to have the whole of Poland, was prepared to uphold the pretensions of both Austria and Prussia, provided they handed over to him their old possessions in that unhappy country. England was determined to drive France out of the Mediterranean, and above all out of Holland and Belgium, and in order once and for all to curb her immemorial foe, was already planning the establishment of a strong German power on the banks of the Rhine.

Those in the Emperor's immediate circle were mistaken, and remained mistaken to the very end; nay, even when the drama was over they still clung to their error; as a matter of fact, it was the confidences of the surviving servants of the Empire that first led Thiers astray. In their opinion the Emperor was wrong in not immediately cutting his losses wholesale; his refusal

**Napoleon's  
Predicament.**

to do so, they maintained, cost him his crown and France her natural frontiers. But, as a matter of fact, in 1813 Napoleon alone saw clearly. Some of the remarks he made prove his extraordinary perspicacity, and the secrets of the Chancelleries, which have now been divulged, justify him up to the hilt. If he had yielded an inch his enemies would have demanded an ell, and if he had yielded the ell, it would have been regarded by Europe as such a confession of weakness that she would have demanded another and yet another ell until, in the end, he would have had nothing left. But, having surrendered everything, he would, willy-nilly, have been forced to disappear; for Napoleon without an Empire had become unthinkable. Bubna was sent to Paris only to throw dust in his eyes. The Emperor, who saw him on the 1st of March, 1813, pretended to trust him. He, too, wished to gain time—time to

## CRACKS IN THE EDIFICE

reach Germany and defeat his enemy. After which that wretched Austria would be at his feet.

Meanwhile, Lebzelter at Russian Headquarters, which had been transferred to Kalisch, and Wessenberg in London, were offering the "mediation" of Austria. The **Austria Offers "Mediation."** suggestion was at first somewhat coldly received —until the Austrian plenipotentiaries succeeded in making plain the secret motives underlying it.

Already the various Chancelleries were referring to Prussia as a certain enemy of Napoleon, when in March, 1813, the defection actually took place. Although it still tried to hoodwink the Emperor and overwhelmed him with protestations of loyalty, the Prussian Government had begged the Tsar to push his armies forward towards the Oder. Meanwhile the King, still anxious about Russia's intentions regarding Poland, had tried to reassure himself and had, as a matter of fact, sent the indefatigable Knesebeck to Kalisch. The Tsar had not been able to disguise his intention of appropriating Warsaw and Posen, but offered Prussia Saxony by way of compensation. Knesebeck, however, was doubtful whether his master would accept this delightful proposal.

**Treaty  
Between  
Russia and  
Prussia.**

Whereupon Alexander pushed his troops in the direction of Berlin; Prussia would doubtless prove more amenable as soon as the Cossacks appeared on the Oder. Knesebeck, however, did not wait for this, but on the 13th of February took upon himself to sign a formal treaty of alliance. Whereupon the Russians marched to Berlin and entered the city on the 11th of March, 1813. The King could now raise his mask, and, on the 16th, Hardenberg, who only the day before had been flattering and fawning on Saint-Marsan, somewhat cold-bloodedly handed him a formal declaration of war. A quiver of joy ran through the whole of Germany. Reynier, who had at last managed to separate himself from Schwarzenberg and had reached Dresden, was

**Prussia  
Declares  
War.**

obliged to quell an uprising in that city where, only a short while previously, Napoleon, at the height of his power, had assembled all the German Princes to bow and scrape before him. But the streets now re-echoed with shouts of "Long live Alexander! Long live the Russians! Out with the French!"



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

This encouraged Austria to become more daring. And she proceeded to arm. True, she still led Napoleon to believe she was doing so only the better to serve his interests. But in a note to the Russian Ambassador, once more installed in Vienna, Metternich declared that the Emperor his master "would use all the forces that Providence had placed in his hands in order to co-operate whole-heartedly with the allied Powers" for the establishment of that peace which he believed to be "necessary for the existence of his Empire and the well-being of Europe."

**Austria  
Arms.**

The Allies, likewise encouraged, made pressing overtures to Austria. After an interview with Lebzeltern at which the latter frankly disclosed Metternich's plan, the Tsar signified his acceptance of it. This made it possible to proceed further. But Narbonne, who had arrived in Vienna, forced Metternich to reveal part of his game. By way of reward for the strengthening of the alliance, he had been instructed to offer Austria Silesia, which was to be taken away from the Prussian traitors. As a matter of fact, the offer was merely made with a view to sounding Vienna's attitude. And after Narbonne had seen Metternich on April 8th, it did not take him long to reach the conclusion that Austria, though officially still an ally, was merely a thinly veiled enemy. He was anxious to force admissions out of Metternich, who was still oozing "friendship." The latter, feeling that his intentions had been partially revealed, thought it would be better to lay a few of his cards on to the table, and on the 12th he sent Narbonne a note informing him that he was going to transform his "intervention" into "armed mediation," which made it impossible to abide by the old treaty of alliance any longer. But before proposing an armistice to the Allies he would await the result of the interview which Schwarzenberg, who had been sent to Paris, was to have with the Emperor Napoleon.

**Metternich  
Unmasked.**

The Austrian Marshal did not go direct to France but stopped at Dresden, Munich and Stuttgart, with the object of prevailing upon the German Princes to play Austria's game. This reveals the frame of mind in which he reached Paris. Under cover of the "advice of an enlightened friend," he was the bearer of Austria's

**Schwarzen-  
berg in Paris.**

## CRACKS IN THE EDIFICE

desiderata. Napoleon received him on the 9th of April, as a friend, certainly, though a friend who was far from pleased. Schwarzenberg's stay in France between 1810 and 1812, when the Empire was at its zenith, had taught him circumspection; he found it difficult to meet Napoleon's angry glance and was terrified by his searching questions. He did not dare to reveal the real proposals he had come to submit. Unfortunately, this led the Emperor to imagine he would be able to intimidate Austria as easily as he had her representative.

Metternich adopted a more daring attitude towards Narbonne, though he still tried to deceive him. While he continued to assure the French Ambassador, who, as a matter of fact, was somewhat sceptical, of his "friendship" and "his bias in favour of France," he was becoming more and more deeply involved with the Allies. Lebzeltern, who had remained with the Tsar, was informed by his Chief that the Emperor of Austria "intended forthwith to take all the steps demanded by his attitude of armed mediation," and that "in the next war Austria would therefore cease to play the part of French auxiliary." Metternich also confessed to Lebzeltern, without beating about the bush, that until fresh developments occurred, he was merely fooling Napoleon. The act of betrayal was becoming more clearly outlined.

Napoleon saw through all these manœuvres more clearly than his Ministers, but he was hoping before long to deliver a violent blow on the Elbe which would enable him to dispense with Austria's help. Confident of victory, at the end of March he was all impatience to be off to the seat of war.

**Napoleon's  
Confidence.**

\* \* \* \* \*

But before he went it was necessary for him to secure his rear—Spain and Italy.

Once again he contemplated the idea of giving up Spain and returning it to Ferdinand VII. But would that wretched creature, even if he promised to do so, have sufficient strength of character to drive out Wellington and his army? If they were left to themselves, the English would make for the Pyrenees and threaten the south of France with invasion while he himself was in Dresden. This was the argument he brought to bear against Maret, who

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

was in favour of abandoning Spain. As a matter of fact, he had another reason for still keeping Joseph in that country—he wished to leave him in Madrid simply to keep him out of Paris, where he was organising the regency and was quite rightly mistrustful of his brother and his party; he had no wish for him to be anywhere near the Empress. But if Joseph remained in Spain he would have to be left in command of the armies and Soult would have to be sacrificed to him. Now, as we know, the King was exasperated with the Marshal and was demanding his recall, threatening to abdicate if “that despicable, perverse and dangerous man was allowed to remain.” But Soult, declared Napoleon, “was the only military brain in Spain.” He was, however, so anxious for Joseph to remain in Madrid for the time being, that, to appease him, he recalled the Duke of Dalmatia. This meant leaving in Spain men who, though excellent soldiers, were not really first-class Generals. As a matter of fact, the Emperor did not expect any brilliant successes from them; he merely asked them to hold their own. As soon as he had won his victory in Germany he would, for better, for worse, have done with Spain. On the 9th of April he informed Schwarzenberg, by way of menace, that as the Allied armies he was obliged to confront in Germany had been reinforced “he would withdraw his army from Spain, come to terms with the Junta and send them back their beloved Ferdinand”; thus “the whole business would be settled”—and his army for Germany doubled!

Hitherto Italy had not appeared to be in any danger, though the *carbonari* were showing considerable activity. Hoping to liberate the peninsula from the French “yoke,” they were turning their eyes to Murat, and hailing him as the future head of a “free and united Italy.” For the time being this was no doubt beyond the scope of Joachim’s ambition, but obsessed with the idea that, even if the Empire were to collapse, he might perhaps prevail upon Europe to secure him in the possession of Naples, he became involved in all manner of intrigues. Moreover, his scandalous flight from Russia had been severely censured by Napoleon. After sending Caroline a letter, the justice of which made it all the more cruel, he wrote to Murat himself: “I do not suppose you are one of those

**Joseph to  
Remain in  
Spain.**

**Soult  
Recalled.**

**Murat’s  
Intrigues.**

## CRACKS IN THE EDIFICE

who believe the lion is dead. If you were counting on that you were wrong. . . . The title of King has made you lose your head. If you wish to keep your crown, you must behave very differently from what you have done hitherto."

As a matter of fact, he had no wish to hit him, but merely to warn him—a very necessary precaution. For, even before deserting his post in Russia, Joachim had sent a secret emissary to Vienna who had brought back encouraging messages from Metternich. On his return to Naples, on the 5th of February, he confided to Count von Mier, the Austrian Minister, that he was anxious again to approach Vienna "to find out whether the existence of his kingdom could not be stipulated in the general arrangements that might be found necessary as the result of Austrian mediation," and, indeed, he actually sent his agent Cariati to Metternich. Furthermore, while conveying to Napoleon the most abject assurances of his devotion and even "love," he

**Lord William Bentinck and Murat.**

was becoming so deeply involved with Lord William Bentinck, who was virtually the English Viceroy of Sicily, that the latter even went to the length of suggesting point-blank that he should actually turn traitor against his brother-in-law, the Emperor. "Tell him," wrote the Englishman to Murat's emissary, "that it depends entirely on himself to become the Bernadotte of Italy." It was a two-edged compliment! But as neither Austria nor England would give any formal undertaking, Murat continued to waver irresolutely between one side and the other.

The Emperor, however, had no intention of leaving this dangerous personage in his rear, and was already meditating putting an end to the whole intrigue by forcing his brother-in-law to resume the post he had deserted at the head of the French cavalry.

Thus believing himself to be fairly safe in the rear, he made up his mind to join his army, nearly the whole of which was on the Elbe. He had conferred the regency of the Empire on Marie Louise, still hoping that this would flatter Austria. And it was the Regent of the Empire herself who, on informing her august father of the signal proof of confidence reposed in her by "her beloved husband," conjured him not to expose himself to the latter's

**Marie Louise Made Regent.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

enmity. "He has a million soldiers under arms and as I know the French and their love for the Emperor, he will have ten times as many if he says he wants them."

And, indeed, Europe at this juncture was filled with vague fears. France, as the records show, seemed to be once more serene and reassured—for a few months. On the 11th of April the Emperor held a review on the Carrousel, the memory of which Balzac afterwards immortalised, basing his narrative on descriptions he had collected from eye-witnesses. The Emperor was wildly acclaimed by the troops and by the people of Paris, once more whole-heartedly on his side. He appeared to be full of joy and energy, with youth renewed, calm and strong.

**Napoleon  
Leaves for  
Mayence.**

Once again he was General Bonaparte, confident in his own genius and in his star. On the 15th of April, 1813, he set out for Mayence, convinced that one or two great blows delivered by his genius would once again put in the ascendant that star which, in spite of the sinister cracks that had appeared in the imperial edifice, he had never once during the last four months really believed to be on the wane.

**SOURCES.** *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XXIII, XXIV). Lecestre, *Lettres inédites* (II). Debretonne, *Lettres inédites*. Comtesse d'Albany, *Portefeuille Le Coz, Lettres*. Czartoryski, *Mémoires et Correspondance*. Aimée de Coigny, *Mémoires*, published by Etienne Lamy; Fiévée, *Lettres* (II). Memoirs and Reminiscences by Caulaincourt, Madame de Chastenay, Thibaudeau, Beugnot (I), Molé, Hyde de Neuville, Desmarest, Berryer (senior), Bourienne (IX), Madame de Staël (*Dix ans*), Plancy, Broglie (I), Dr. Poumiès de la Siboutie, and Villemain.

**WORKS.** Those already mentioned by Sorel (VIII), Lacour-Gayet (II), Masson (VII, VIII, IX), Madelin (*Fouché*), La Force, (*Lebrun*), Pingaud (*Bernadotte*), Gauthier (*Madame de Staël*), Gabory (*Vendée*), Haussonville (*Eglise romaine*), Welschinger (*Pape et Empereur*), Gigon, *Le général Mallet*. Gaffarel, *Guidal*. D'Ussel, *La défection de la Prusse*. D'Ussel, *L'intervention de l'Autriche*. Masson, *Marie-Louise*.

## CHAPTER XLIV

### THE SPRING CAMPAIGN AND THE CONGRESS OF PRAGUE

Narbonne in Vienna; Napoleon, fearing that Austria will declare against him, anxious to secure swift victory. The army of 1813. The victory of Lützen; the Allies in full retreat. The Emperor in Dresden. Metternich reaches an understanding with the Allies regarding the "bases of peace." Bubna in Dresden; the Emperor postpones the mediation of Austria. The victory of Bautzen. The Allies have no alternative but to beg for an armistice; Napoleon consents to this at Pläswitz. He prepares for further fighting on the Elbe; his weakness lies in the inferiority of his lieutenants; Moreau advises the Allies to concentrate their efforts on the latter. Metternich prepares Austria's entry into the Coalition. The Dresden interview. Extension of the armistice. Joseph's defeat at Vittoria and the loss of Spain. The Congress of Prague mere eye-wash. Caulaincourt at Prague; the "good European." Metternich acquaints him with the Allied "bases" in the shape of an ultimatum. In the absence of a reply from the Emperor, the Congress declares itself dissolved without ever having really existed. Austria at war.

**O**N the 17th of April, 1813, Napoleon reached Mayence, where he found despatches from Narbonne awaiting him. The latter, suspecting Austria's various machinations, had been doing his best to expose them. In his interviews with

**Narbonne in  
Vienna.**

Metternich he had made himself perfectly clear, and forced the wily Austrian to lay his cards on the table. Were they or were they not allies? In the end Metternich had sent the tiresome Ambassador to Francis II. The latter received him on the 23rd of April, and, irritated by his "indiscretion," was somewhat short with him, which at least led to his making his intentions fairly clear and sent the Ambassador away from the audience in a state of consternation.

Napoleon was annoyed and felt that Narbonne had exerted too much pressure in this quarter; it was to his interest for Vienna to continue wavering. He required a few weeks in which to crush the Russians and the Prussians, and it would be extremely awkward if Austria suddenly threw in her lot with them. He asked

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

for further explanations which, for his own part, he hoped would be rather more vague. Metternich also had no wish for an immediate rupture; he was waiting on events. The Emperor saw that he must precipitate them and set out from Mayence to join his army.

### **Napoleon Joins His Army.**

Eugene had been waiting for him on the Elbe for the last six weeks. As soon as all his troops had been concentrated on the river, Napoleon would have 200,000 men ready to hurl immediately against the allied force of 150,000 men. His troops were full of zeal and ardour, merely tinged with a certain melancholy; it seemed at times as though the spirit of 1792 had been revived by this reflux of Europe towards the Rhine, and the *Marseillaise*, which for the last ten years had not been heard, sprang spontaneously to the soldiers' lips. "Never," wrote one officer, "had recruiting produced such a fine type of combatant."

### **The Army of 1813.**

The two weak points in this army lay in the inexperience of the young recruits and the presence in their midst of over 60,000 Germans, imbued with the spirit prevalent between the Rhine and the Vistula and ready to turn traitor at the first repulse. Added to this the cavalry corps, which could have acted so well on the plains round the Elbe, was third-rate. But Napoleon felt that victory secured by the excellent morale of his French troops, and above all by his own genius, would be sufficient to fortify the German auxiliaries, while the raw recruits would be trained in the actual fight and be moulded under fire.

His plan of campaign was all ready cut and dried, and like all his former ones it was simplicity itself. The Allies, having met with no serious resistance, had advanced from the Oder to the Elbe; already they had crossed the latter river and were marching towards the Saale. The Emperor, making for the Weimar district, would join Eugene south of Leipzig and, rapidly ascending the Elbe, would take in the rear such of the Allied troops as had crossed the river, and drive the rest back on to the Oder. He would then march to Berlin and dictate the terms of peace.

### **Napoleon's Plan of Campaign.**

The Allies seemed to be blind to his intention. They had advanced in loose formation, and when they were on the point of

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being attacked, both in front and on the flank, their contact was still far from perfect.

Meanwhile Eugene was ascending the Saale and Napoleon went to meet him with the corps under Ney, Oudinot, and Marmont. On reaching Weissenfels, Ney made up his mind to cross the river near Lützen; here he fell in with the Russians under Wintzingerode, whom he fought and defeated, thus making it possible for the junction between Eugene and the Emperor to be effected. The latter had planned to advance on Leipzig, where he would wheel round, advancing his left wing, which was to fall upon the Allies and bring them to a stand in the Bohemian mountains, which, for the time being, was neutral territory belonging to Austria. The pivot of the manœuvre was to be Ney, who was to take up his position in the villages round about Lützen.

The proceedings opened on the 2nd of May; the enemy's aim seemed to be to turn the French flank by slipping in between Lützen and the Bohemian mountains. This suited Napoleon's purpose admirably, for it was here that he wished to pulverise them. But it was imperative for him to capture Leipzig in order to have ample space for wheeling round. And he made a lightning attack on the place and seized it. But the Allies, at last scenting the danger, had hurled themselves on Ney with the object of destroying the pivot.

The villages of Gross-Görschen, Klein-Görschen, Rahna, Steinsiedel and Kaja, which were held by the Marshal, were exposed to the most furious attacks, above all by Blücher's Prussians, intoxicated with patriotic rage and fury. Under the onslaught Ney lost his first position, then part of his second, and the enemy's General Staff were already shouting victory. But the Prince of the Moskva's determined resistance at his second position enabled Napoleon to send troops to the rescue. The villages were recaptured; but once more attacked by Blücher, at the head of the Royal Guards, they were long and hotly disputed. Napoleon, who had joined Ney, now took command of operations. Just as the Allies, cut to pieces and driven out of

### **The Victory of Lützen.**

all the villages, were preparing to beat a formal retreat, the Young Guard suddenly halted, thus apparently giving them an opportunity to escape; but it was only to deliver them over to Drouot's guns, which now



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

began to belch forth fire and swept the ranks of the routed foe, whom Macdonald and Marmont were also attacking on the two wings and threatening to surround. The Allied General Staff, disappointed in their hopes, gave hurried orders to retreat, after having lost 20,000 men.

\* \* \* \* \*

It had not been a knock-out blow, yet, for Napoleon, it was a victory that might bear precious fruit. Installed in the very heart of Germany, he returned to Dresden, already in a position to hurl himself on Berlin. This was enough to give the Germans, who twenty-four hours previously had been ready to desert the French cause, and even Metternich himself, food for reflection. Already Napoleon was making it known that he now repudiated all idea of "armed mediation" on the part of Austria, who, as he wrote to Narbonne, "would place French interests at the mercy of a Court dominated by bitterest hatred of France."

But Metternich felt himself too deeply compromised to draw back; on the contrary, he wished to hasten Austria's adhesion to the Coalition, which would make the latter invincible. Definite agreements, however, had first to be reached and on the 7th of May he despatched Stadion to the Tsar with detailed instructions. It was a matter of arriving at a definite understanding regarding the proposals which, on threat of joining the Coalition, Metternich was to submit to Napoleon as providing "the bases of a sound continental peace." The sacrifice which this future "mediator" was already suggesting should be demanded of France was the surrender of all she possessed beyond her natural frontiers. But it was necessary to give Stadion time to accomplish his mission and also to deceive Narbonne. Metternich saw the latter on the 7th, and pretended that he was already in possession of Russia's proposals—they were, as a matter of fact, the terms he himself had just suggested to the Allies—and he put the coping-stone to his hypocrisy by declaring that he considered them excessive and refused to accept some of them. Narbonne saw through his game—Metternich was merely preparing Napoleon for the most exorbitant demands.

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The Emperor, duly warned, began to regard it as probable, if not inevitable, that before long Austria would join his enemies, and he sent Eugene back to Italy to make preparations, if need be, to repulse an invasion on the part of these new adversaries. As for himself, after winning another victory and hurling the Russians and the Prussians back on to the Vistula, he would turn on Austria and catch her between two fires.

### **Eugene Sent Back to Italy.**

The results of Lützen were everywhere visible. The King of Saxony, who at one time had reached an understanding with Austria, disowned the treaty he had signed with her at Linz and returned to Dresden. Germany was showing no signs of life. But, as a matter of fact, everything was in a state of suspense. Clearly a second and far more decisive victory was required.

At first there seemed to be no stopping the Allied forces who had been defeated at Lützen; they were beating a headlong and precipitate retreat—the Oder, the Vistula, anywhere! But this meant abandoning Germany and leaving Austria in the lurch. At last they stopped on the upper reaches of the Spree; 45,000 fresh troops had arrived to restore their chances of victory. It was decided to give battle near Bautzen. Meanwhile Metternich was still endeavouring to detain the Emperor, and on the 16th of March, just as the latter was on the point of leaving Dresden, Bubna, having been instructed to keep him amused, once more presented himself.

### **Retreat of the Allies.**

On the 15th of May, while the retreat was still in full swing, Stadion had joined the Allied Sovereigns at Görlitz; the latter, of course, agreed to the whole catalogue of demands, and Nesselrode, representing Russia, and Hardenberg, Prussia, adopted them not as "unalterable conditions," but merely as "bases," which seemed to imply that they merely constituted a minimum. England, who had not yet been apprised of them, might, when called upon to support them, make various additions. But it was expected that Napoleon would reject them without further ado, and since in that case Austria's adhesion to the Coalition was regarded as inevitable, Stadion was openly admitted to the military councils of the Allies. Meanwhile Bubna, who was supposed to have presented himself to Napoleon for the purpose of frankly

### **Stadion Joins the Allied Sovereigns.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

enlightening him regarding the proposals about to be submitted to him, was keeping back a good deal. Austria offered to summon a Congress in Prague at which she would act as mediator on the lines already described. This was the most insidious trap that could possibly have been devised, for, at the instigation of Austria herself, the Allies had just decided upon a minimum of concessions far in excess of the maximum which Bubna assured Napoleon would be demanded of him.

But Narbonne had warned the Emperor of what his interviews with Metternich had led him to surmise, and Bubna had been unmasked before he arrived. It was not difficult for the Emperor to guess that an attempt was being made to induce him to

**Napoleon and  
Bubna.**

put his finger into a cog which would gradually draw in his hand, his arm, his whole body. However, he allowed Bubna to develop his theme, but declared point-blank, "I will have none of your armed mediation. You are trying to fish in troubled waters. But provinces are not won with rose-water. . . . You will begin by demanding Illyria, and go on to ask for Venetia, then Milan, and then Tuscany, until you force me to fight you. Better begin by fighting! Yes, if you want provinces, blood must be spilt!" As Sorel observes, he might almost have read the Note which at that very moment Nesselrode and Hardenberg were drawing up with Stadion.

It would be better, the Emperor declared, to deal direct with the Tsar himself, who at least "had made straightforward war on him." And he sent Caulaincourt to him. But it was to the latter's advantage to let Metternich act; he postponed receiving the Duke of Vicenza and in the end sent him back to Austria.

Napoleon left Dresden on the 18th. The whole of his army was already on the upper Spree. This little river has its source

**Napoleon  
Leaves  
Dresden.**

in the Bohemian mountains, which the left wing of the Allies was hugging, so to speak, in order to avoid being outflanked in that quarter. The river, which then winds round to the west of Bautzen, is less enclosed in this district, and runs between two little chains of hills which provide an army with extremely strong first and second positions. True, further north it enters a low-lying but extremely marshy plain on which any attempt to turn the

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Allies' right would inevitably have foundered. And though Napoleon intended to attack the whole of this front, he expected to break it only by means of an encircling movement conceived on a much larger scale than the enemy was expecting. Ney, who after Lützen had been hurried along the road to Berlin, was ordered to cross the Spree a long way north of the battlefield, and then, having received reinforcements, to double back along the right bank to the rear of the enemy, who would thus be surrounded.

On the 20th of May the Emperor launched the attack against the whole of the first position from the Bohemian mountains to the north of Bautzen. The attack was to be particularly violent—but this was only a feint—against the enemy's left, where Napoleon wished it to be believed that he was aiming at breaking the line with the object of turning the left wing, whereas it was on the right, as we know, that he really intended to outflank his adversaries. Moreover, the Allies, who feared only for their left, had placed their main forces on that side. They knew that Ney's contingent was on their extreme right—a long way off; but under-estimating its strength, they were troubling very little about it.

By nightfall on the 20th the whole of the enemy's first position from the spurs of the Bohemian mountains had been captured. In the centre Macdonald had taken Bautzen by storm, while on the French left Marmont had captured the hills on the left bank of the Spree. So full of fire and energy were his troops that he could easily have proceeded to an immediate attack on the hills on the other side. But Napoleon wished to leave Blücher and his army there in order that the enveloping movement entrusted to Ney could be carried out on the following day in such a way as to make its full force felt.

As a matter of fact, it was on this manœuvre that the Emperor was pinning all his hopes of the crushing victory for which he had prepared. Unfortunately, Ney, though he was a man of supreme courage, had never been a great strategist, and disappointed his chief's expectations. True, he apparently advanced with extreme care and deliberation in the direction mapped out for him; but after a time he stopped and waited for the battle to be reopened

**Ney  
Disappoints  
Napoleon.**

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before he proceeded any further. Napoleon, no longer hearing the boom of his guns, began to grow impatient. But hoping that by a wide enveloping movement Ney had outflanked Blücher, he eventually hurled Bertrand against the Prussians, whereupon Ney continued his advance, though extremely slowly. The attack, launched along the whole front, was everywhere victorious. Blücher intended to make a counter-attack, but the news of Ney's advance alarmed him and he ordered a retreat. The Prince of the Moskva should at all costs have cut him off; but apparently oblivious of his main mission, he lost time in occupying the positions vacated by the enemy and allowed them to retire. They had, however, been badly buffeted.

But Blücher's retreat meant the sudden collapse of the whole of the enemy's line, and before nightfall the entire Allied army was in retreat along the Oder. They had lost 15,000 men, together with a large part of their artillery, and, according to all accounts, presented a most deplorable spectacle of demoralisation. They were driven at the point of the sword to the Katzbach, where they tried to make a stand. But the French left reached the Oder and raised the siege of Glogau. If Napoleon, following up his success, were to occupy the whole length of the river, he would also release Breslau and Stettin, where large garrisons were shut up, and increase his forces by some 60,000 men. Langeron, one of the Allied Generals, declared that, had he been able to do this, Napoleon would have been in a position to dictate the terms of peace; while from Vienna Roger de Damas wrote bitterly, "The Empire has met the crisis and emerged triumphant."

Metternich, thunderstruck, resolved to stop Napoleon by means of fresh artifices. He suggested that the defeated Allies should ask for an armistice. "They have more need of it than Napoleon," was the advice from Vienna. The latter received the first overtures somewhat coldly. But those about him were unanimous that an armistice would be opportune. Bubna, who had returned to Dresden, was intriguing right and left, and circulating the rumour that if the Emperor did not sign the armistice Austria would immediately declare against him. Napoleon himself believed this, and he knew that it would not be easy to face this new menace until he had received reinforcements from

## THE SPRING CAMPAIGN

France. He accordingly decided to sign an armistice at Pläswitz on the 4th of June. It was to expire on the 20th of July. This date had been suggested by Metternich after consultation with Schwarzenberg, who, having been made Commander-in-Chief of the Austrian forces on his return from Paris, felt it would give him the necessary breathing-space for getting his army ready to attack. The Emperor may have been unaware of this, but hardly had he signed than he felt that a noose had been placed round his neck. "Berthier and Caulaincourt urged me," he declared, as though he were apologising for a mistake. Where were the days when he had not allowed himself to be urged and when, rather than lend an ear to the advice of semi-besotted councillors, he listened only to the promptings of his own wisdom?

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To use Sorel's expression, the armistice was nothing but a "blind" behind which the coalition of all Europe was at last to be cemented. Metternich was anxious to justify its formation, and, above all, Austria's adhesion to it, by discrediting the Emperor. It was necessary that when called upon to send a plenipotentiary to the Congress which was to meet at Prague for the ostensible purpose of securing peace in Europe by means of the armistice, Napoleon should either refuse, or appear to have declined "reasonable" proposals. The Emperor scented the trap; he had consented to the principle of the Congress, but was determined not to send his representatives until he had taken various precautions. Having signed the wretched armistice he was determined at least to reap the benefit of it, which, in his case, consisted in having an opportunity for strengthening his army. But he calculated that to make it once again overwhelmingly strong he required more than the seven weeks accorded by the convention of the 4th of June, and he hoped that the Congress would meet sufficiently late and last long enough for the armistice to be prolonged for at least another month. Moreover, he wished to be certain that the Congress itself should not be a mere farce in which he was to play the part

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

of dupe; he meant it to be, as every real Congress should be, an assembly in which the representatives of the belligerents should enter into serious discussions among themselves and not exclusively through the extremely suspect channel of a man like Metternich. Still less would he tolerate Metternich acting as the mouthpiece of the rest and presenting him with an ultimatum to which he would have to reply either Yes! or No! And he insisted that, before appointing his representatives, he should know the conditions on which France was expected to attend the Congress.

He did not return to Dresden until the 10th of June and found that Bubna had been there for the last ten days kicking his heels with impatience. He had been instructed to inform the Emperor that since her offer of mediation had been definitely accepted by the Allies, Austria must perforce ask the belligerents to state the conditions on which they would consent to make peace.

Napoleon received him on the 14th, but only semi-officially, to tell him what he felt about the equivocal part Metternich was playing.

He was persuaded that the latter's sole object was to force him into war; this is proved by the fact that, foreseeing the defection of Austria, he was already choosing and organising the field of battle on which he had made up his mind to meet the concerted attack of all Europe. He could not resume the fight at the point at which it had been interrupted between the Elbe and the Oder, for the moment Austria declared against him he ran the risk of seeing an army debouching from Bohemia in his rear. He accordingly prepared his position all along the line of the Elbe, which he was busy fortifying from Hamburg to the very slopes of the Bohemian plateau. This line possessed certain advantages, but it was too long; in order to hold it he would be obliged to divide up his army and confide each section to one of his lieutenants, on whom, with the exception of Davout—unfortunately posted a long way north—he could certainly not rely as he could on himself. This weakness was all the more serious seeing that the Allies would be sure to seize upon it. The latter might not have noticed and turned it to account had they not at

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this juncture had the advantage of being advised by the wretched Moreau, who, having allowed himself to be persuaded by Bernadotte to return to Europe, was already placing his experience as a French General at the service of his country's enemies. He agreed with Bernadotte in recommending the Allies to confine their tactics to avoiding Napoleon and concentrating their attacks on his lieutenants, which implied that neither Moreau nor Bernadotte thought much of the military talents and the presence of mind of their old comrades-in-arms. Napoleon himself did not altogether trust them, but he comforted himself with the reflection that before long, with reinforcements arriving every day, the dash and valour of his troops would bear their leaders along and fire them with their own enthusiasm.

But the Emperor required at the very least another month in which to reorganise and strengthen his various army corps, and it was for this reason that he wished to have the termination of the armistice postponed from the 20th of July to the 20th of August. Metternich was not slow to perceive his motives, but as a matter of fact the delay also to some extent suited his own purpose; for, what with one thing and another, he too required a few more weeks in which to complete his skilful diplomatic manœuvre. In fact, if I may say so, he was anxious to put the finishing touches to the last act of the farce which, together with various other advantages, was to win him the reputation of being the first statesman of his age. And before confronting Napoleon himself—for in order the better to dupe him, he meant to have a personal interview with him—it was necessary for him to get from the European coalition a blank cheque which would make him master of the situation.

On the 15th of June he went to Opotschna in Silesia, where he was to meet the Allied Sovereigns and their Ministers. The latter, before going there themselves on the same day, had met the British representative, Lord Cathcart, at Reichenbach, and signed the treaty which was to bind them to England, who, for the time being, abstained from formulating her conditions but merely obtained from the Allies a formal promise

**Moreau  
Advises the  
Allies.**

**Metternich's  
Diplomatic  
Campaign.**

**Metternich  
Meets the  
Allied  
Sovereigns.**



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not to make a separate peace without her. Thus if, by great good fortune, the Congress of Prague were to result in an agreement, England could always refuse her adherence and demand more from Napoleon than the conditions imposed upon him and duly accepted. This simple undertaking seemed to England worth the subsidy of £4,000,000 which she was to pay the Coalition. And when a suitable opportunity occurred to add to the demands—to wrest Belgium, for instance, as well as Holland from Napoleon—she would force the Coalition to continue the war. And yet at Reichenbach, Stadion, the Austrian emissary to the Allied Sovereigns, had already outlined the bases which were to be a *sine qua non* for the opening of “negotiations” at Prague. And he promised that Austria would bring the full weight of her mediation to bear in support of these demands, though they were to be merely preliminaries to the general peace “in the event of England wishing to be a party to it.”

It only remained for Metternich to give his consent. He was well aware that this agreement constituted merely a minimum; for it was hoped that England would have various little additions to make, such as the evacuation of Italy and Holland—just to go on with. But, with a refinement of guile, in which the hand of the wily Austrian Chancellor is clearly visible, it was decided that only the first four clauses were to be made public. If Napoleon rejected the plan, would there be a single Frenchman who would not blame him for having refused to make, in the cause of peace, sacrifices which, after all, deprived France of nothing? And yet, as soon as Metternich's back was turned, the Allied Sovereigns and their Ministers were apparently seized with qualms. They had been too moderate! And as early as the 19th Nesselrode drafted a Note which, under an extremely transparent veil, put even the natural frontiers in question, maintaining that it would be necessary to raise “powerful barriers” against France. It was obvious where they were to be created—in Belgium and the Rhineland. Metternich, immediately informed of this Note, agreed to the spirit of it.

The time had come when he felt he could confront the Emperor himself at Dresden; he craved an audience and Napoleon granted

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it. The latter was also impatient to see Metternich and, if possible, tear the mask from the face of this "knave."

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The interview took place on the 26th of June in the Marcolini Palace where Napoleon was installed. He received Metternich in a long gallery opening out of his own room.

**Metternich's  
Interview  
with  
Napoleon.**

At first he was affable, but his expression soon clouded as he surveyed the inscrutable features of his visitor—that "plaster face," as the Tsar called it. "But for your disastrous intervention,"

he declared, "peace would by now have been made between the Allies and myself. . . . Confess it—ever since Austria assumed the rôle of mediator she has no longer been on my side; she is no longer impartial, she is against me." Metternich protested—peace depended entirely on the moderation of the Emperor of the French. "Very well then, let us discuss terms. I consent. What do you want?" The Minister sought refuge in vague generalities and the Emperor grew impatient. "Let us be more explicit," he exclaimed. "I have offered you Illyria as the price of your neutrality. Does that suit you? My army is quite strong enough to bring the Russians and the Prussians to reason, and all I ask of you is neutrality."—"But why should Your Majesty not double his forces?" Metternich had the effrontery to ask. "The whole of our army is yours for the asking!" The lie annoyed the Emperor, but he was anxious to convince Metternich that he could win without the help of Austria, and he proceeded to launch forth on the strength of his armies. But damn it all, what did the Coalition want and what was Metternich doing in Dresden? Yes, he thought so, they wished to despoil him, and if he acceded to some of their demands, they would immediately insist on more. "In short,

**Napoleon's  
Insight.**

you want Italy, Russia wants Poland, Prussia Saxony, and England Holland and Belgium.

You are all aiming at nothing less than the dismemberment of the French Empire!" Metternich must have admired his wonderful insight. "Yes," continued Napoleon, "I should have to evacuate Europe, half of which I still occupy, lead back my legions, arms reversed, across the Rhine, the Alps and the Pyrenees, and place myself and my future at the mercy

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of those whose conqueror I am to-day! What sort of a figure do they expect me to cut before the French people? Your Emperor is strangely mistaken if he imagines that a mutilated throne in France can afford refuge for his daughter and his grandson! Ah! Metternich, how much has England paid you for playing such a part against me?" It was a slip of the tongue prompted by rage, and, as it escaped his lips, the Emperor, thoroughly exasperated—or wishing to appear so—threw his hat on the floor. In 1811,

in the Tuileries, Metternich would have picked **Metternich's** it up; now he pretended not to have seen it. **Independence.** Napoleon, pacing up and down the gallery, continued to boast about his armies; he would crush all his enemies as he had done before! Now and again his foot touched the wretched hat, and at last he angrily picked it up.

Our authority for the whole of this interview consists of a note dictated by the Emperor to Maret soon after it took place and two accounts given by Metternich himself. But it is impossible for the historian to be quite clear as to what may possibly have been arranged between the two parties. The only words of the interview that bear the undoubted stamp of truth are those with which it closed, for they confirm the fact that, in spite of all, Napoleon was, as I have already observed, resolutely convinced that, when all was said and done, the Emperor of Austria, who was such a "good father," would find he had not the heart to compass the ruin of the King of Rome's throne. Suddenly he resumed a cordial tone and placing his hand on Metternich's shoulder, said coaxingly: "Do you know what is going to happen? You are not going to make war on me!"

In his heart of hearts, Metternich had been more frightened than he confessed in his Memoirs, in which he naturally blew his own trumpet. As a matter of fact, he had not dared to submit a single definite proposal. He continued the interview with Maret. He was genuinely anxious. Was the Austrian army sufficiently prepared to secure the Allies the crushing and decisive victory they required? For Austria, defeat would mean annihilation. He enquired of Schwarzenberg how soon he would be ready to join in the conflict and on receiving his reply played the part of the prince

**Extension  
of the  
Armistice.**

bountiful, offered to obtain an extension of the armistice till the

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date mentioned by the Marshal, and announced his departure for the 30th. But Napoleon wished to see him again; this time he showed him nothing but cordiality, and told him that if the armistice were prolonged he would send deputies to the Congress. Metternich took his departure; he had some difficulty in obtaining the consent of the Allies to a prolongation; and having done so it meant postponing the Congress until the 12th of July. Whereupon the Emperor left Dresden to inspect the Elbe line.

Just as he was getting into his carriage he was handed a despatch which made him turn pale; the news it contained was

### **Bad News from Spain.**

calculated to make his position in Europe even more difficult. The lamentable Spanish venture had ended in disaster! A series of mistakes of all

kinds had enabled Wellington to return to the warpath and Joseph had been obliged to leave Madrid. In spite of this he had insisted on at last exercising the authority of Commander-in-Chief that had been conferred upon him; but Wellington, who had forced the passage of the Douro, had assumed such a menacing attitude that the King, seized with panic, made a mad rush for the Pyrenees with his troops. Caught up at Vittoria and forced to fight on the 17th of June, he handed over the command to his Chief of Staff, Marshal Jourdan, who proceeded to make all the mistakes he should have avoided. His incapacity lost him the battle and he retreated in disorder to the foot of the Pyrenees.

### **Loss of Spain.**

Spain was lost—and under the worst possible conditions. True, Suchet was still in possession of Catalonia and Joseph's army had not yet

crossed the mountains. But this was all that remained of a once magnificent army destined sooner or later to be swept out of the country.

Napoleon had not the smallest doubt where the responsibility lay. He knew that it was Joseph who had made a hash of the whole business, and the first order he sent was to deprive him of the command of the troops that had been driven to bay in the Pyrenees and hand it over to Soult, who would at least do his

### **Joseph Disgraced.**

best to stop this "shameful" retreat. The King, completely disgraced, was relegated to the Château de Mortefontaine, where he had an estate, and

forbidden to leave it or to receive anybody. Thus his unfortunate

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

"Catholic Majesty," who three months previously had regarded himself as the successor of Charles V, was virtually placed under lock and key. As a matter of fact, the Emperor was determined he should not come to Paris and interfere with the conduct of the Regency.

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The Congress was on the point of opening and the representatives of France had to attend it under the worst possible auspices. For Metternich still regarded it as a mere blind, an attitude shared by the Allies, as is proved by their choice of plenipotentiaries. It was only reasonable to expect that at a gathering convened for the ostensible purpose of deciding the fate of Europe, the Powers would have been represented by their leading Ministers, men like Nesselrode and Hardenberg. But Prussia sent a subordinate named Humboldt, whose sole recommendation was his abysmal hatred of France, while Russia's emissary was an agent of the international crusade against Napoleon, a certain Baron Anstedt, who was also an Alsatian *émigré*. Furthermore these two men were not to conduct any negotiations; they were not, at any stage of the proceedings, to deal with the French representatives, but were merely to submit through Metternich the demands to which Napoleon's plenipotentiaries were to reply through the same medium. It will readily be understood that the Emperor showed but little inclination to countenance this impudent farce.

He delayed sending his plenipotentiaries. He insisted, in the first place, that Caulaincourt should be summoned to a "meeting" and not ordered to appear before a "court." But this gave rise to a general upheaval among all his followers in Dresden—the Emperor, they declared, was throwing away the last chance of peace.

**Caulaincourt  
Sent to the  
Congress.** Fouché, whom he had summoned from Paris, for the sole purpose of preventing him from intriguing there, was intriguing in Dresden. But the most dangerous adviser of all was Caulaincourt himself, who, as we know, ever since his sojourn in St. Petersburg, had been a "European"; in fact, he openly confessed as much to Metternich, and, blinded by his sincere belief in the enemy's good faith, regarded the Emperor, his master, as the only disturber of

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the peace. If, in spite of this, the latter appointed him his representative, it was, in the first place, because he still regarded him as a faithful friend, and, secondly and chiefly, because he knew him to be *persona grata* in Europe. However, he hedged him round with the strictest and most precise instructions, insisting that from the outset all excessive demands should be met by the claim of *uti possidetis*—unless, of course, mutual concessions could be agreed upon.

Caulaincourt always remained convinced that had he been left a free hand he would have persuaded the Allies to retreat. It was a curious illusion; for at that very moment Metternich was losing no opportunity of telling certain confidants that he had ceased

**Bernadotte  
Meets the  
Allied  
Sovereigns.**

to trouble his head about this or that condition—war was imperative! Meanwhile, in response to an appeal from the Allied Sovereigns, Bernadotte had gone to Trachenberg to reach an understanding with them on the subject of the coming operations.

He was to command the northern army and with 130,000 men was to descend from Pomerania direct on Saxony, while Blücher, at the head of an army of 120,000 men, raised in Silesia, was to attack straight ahead in the direction of Dresden, and Schwarzenberg, with 120,000 Austro-Russians, was to debouch from Bohemia and take the French armies on the flank. The Congress had become a mere formality conducted to please Metternich and to serve his Machiavellian purpose.

On arriving at Prague on the 28th of July, the Duke of Vicenza, though convinced that he would find grave reasons for anxiety, was simple-minded enough to imagine that his grace and charm

**Caulaincourt  
at Prague.**

would suffice to remove them. However, he overrated the power of his personality. Some historians baldly assert that he turned traitor. I have

endeavoured to elucidate this distressing problem and have been unable to come to the conclusion that Caulaincourt was guilty of actual treachery. But, if any faith is to be placed in the testimony of the enemy's plenipotentiaries, there is certainly room for all manner of suspicions. Apparently he led Metternich to believe that by making heavy demands on Napoleon he would be serving the cause of France. "Send us back to France either by means of peace or by means of war, and thirty million Frenchmen and all

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

the enlightened servants and friends of the Emperor will call down blessings on your head." This assertion is so preposterous as to be almost incredible. "I am just as much of a European as you can possibly be," he is also said to have declared—and this, at any rate, sounds less improbable. It has always been a pose among a certain class of Frenchmen to pass themselves off on occasion before foreigners as being more European than French.

But the other "Europeans," who still remained natives of their respective countries, quickly exploited this imprudent candour.

**Caulaincourt Deceived.** There was no need for Metternich to deceive Caulaincourt; the latter deceived himself. All he had to do was to confirm him in his error, and he swore that Austria had not the ghost of an agreement with any other Power. Caulaincourt, thus reassured, felt confident of coming to terms. But whom was he to come to terms with? He did not even see the foreign plenipotentiaries, who, shut up in their own rooms, conducted negotiations entirely by means of notes sent through the Austrian Chancellor.

Meanwhile the Emperor, who had nothing whatever to do with this sorry farce, had set out for Mayence, where he was to meet the Empress. As a matter of fact, he wished to be nearer Paris in order to gauge the state of public opinion in France.

What must chiefly have alarmed him was the depression of his Ministers and those high functionaries who, as Molé confessed, "in their official pronouncements professed deep devotion to their chief and confidence in the present and the future, which they one and all proceeded to deny in the bosoms of

**Depression of Napoleon's Ministers.**

their families, where they did nothing but abuse him, making the domestic hearth re-echo with the curses they called down upon his head." In order to combat this secret pessimism, which to-day is aptly termed defeatism, the Emperor, in the presence of the Empress Regent and those who had come with her from Paris, behaved as though he were overflowing with optimism and good cheer. As a matter of fact, he was to a certain extent

**Napoleon's Optimism.**

sincere, for he felt that a great victory would set everything right, and was convinced that it lay within his grasp. Moreover, he had received a letter from Murat which gave him great pleasure—the Gascon

## THE SPRING CAMPAIGN

was leaving Naples to take up his command again. "To love and serve you is a necessity for him," Caroline had written to her brother, and Joachim himself, in placing his sword at the disposal of his Emperor, was making honourable amends for past delinquencies. "Never doubt my heart, Sire; it is better than my head!"

Napoleon returned to Dresden well satisfied. By the 4th of August he was once more installed there and filled his General Staff with astonishment by his gaiety and good spirits. And yet he knew that before long he would have to meet an enemy whose strength had been doubled by the arrival of Bernadotte in Germany and the adhesion of Austria to the Coalition. As a matter of fact, Maret was writing to tell Caulaincourt that it was precisely because the Emperor found himself in a difficult position, but one that was worthy of his genius, that he was filled with secret joy.

### **Napoleon Returns to Dresden.**

Meanwhile he was still endeavouring to restrain Austria, and on the 5th of August wrote from Dresden to Caulaincourt telling him to get into personal touch with Metternich. But the latter managed to avoid a private conversation, and on the 7th of August made up his mind to inform Caulaincourt of the conditions demanded by the Allies. "Austria," he added, "is not yet allied with Russia and Prussia," we know how much truth there was in this!—"But she will join the cause of Europe if peace is not made by the 10th!"

### **Metternich's Ultimatum.**

Thus the Emperor was given only forty-eight hours in which to answer Yes! or No! to what amounted to an ultimatum. And even if he accepted this ultimatum the signature of peace was by no means certain. For these conditions, declared Metternich, were "apparently" attached by the Allies to any "arrangements" which might "lead" to a general peace.

Caulaincourt, the "good European," showed no indignation but urged his master to lose no time. As the Allied plenipotentiaries were showing signs of anxiety at this juncture (what if Napoleon were to accept!), Metternich informed Humboldt that "on the 11th war would certainly be declared, whatever Napoleon replied!"

Caulaincourt's report did not reach Dresden until the morning of the 9th. An answer was to be received by midnight on the 10th. Napoleon read the Note which, though it demanded from him



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

three-quarters of his possessions outside France, contained no definite assurance that if he made these sacrifices he would secure the neutrality of Austria. He had always declared that he would never tolerate having an answer wrested from him with a dagger at his throat, and it was not until the morning of the 10th that he despatched a Note in which he accepted some of the proposals and rejected others. As it did not reach Prague on the 10th, at midnight Metternich declared the Congress dissolved. But how could a Congress be "dissolved" which, owing to the way in which matters had been conducted, had never really "met"? Be this as it may, on the morning of the 11th of

### **Austria Declares War.**

August, 1813, Austria declared war. But, according to Metternich, Austria would in any case have joined the conflict on that date. From beginning to end the Congress had been a mere farce; Nesselrode, who was behind the scenes all the time, confessed as much. "Never has there been so ludicrous a Congress," he wrote.

Nevertheless, this farce had secured the results expected by those responsible for it. "How strong Napoleon must feel to imagine he can refuse so advantageous a peace!" wrote Princess Radziwill with obvious sincerity. This Prussian aristocrat must have believed in the good faith of the Allies; the peoples of Europe also believed in it, but, what was far more dangerous, France, like Caulaincourt, believed in it too. And already from

### **Napoleon Mis- represented.**

Prague the myth was spread abroad which within the space of four months was to be confirmed by the Declaration of Frankfort—Napoleon, in his mad pride, had "refused an advantageous peace!" He had criminally hurled two million souls back into the maelstrom of war! From the indignation to which such a belief was bound to give rise, even more than from the success of its arms, did the Coalition expect the triumph of its cause and the downfall of its enemy.

For SOURCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY, see the end of Chapter XLV.

## CHAPTER XLV

### DRESDEN AND LEIPZIG

Arrangement of the French armies. Blücher driven back. The Bohemian Army in Saxony. The Emperor's plan; he is obliged to modify it. The two battles of Dresden. Death of Moreau. The routed Allies try to regain Bohemia. The pursuit confided to Vandamme, who allows himself to be crushed at Kulm. The Emperor obliged to make good the reverses suffered by Macdonald on the Katzbach and of Oudinot at Grossbeeren; he again repulses Blücher. Ney defeated at Dennewitz. The Bohemian Army returns to Saxony. The Allies aim at effecting a junction at Leipzig. Blücher advances on the Elbe. Napoleon marches against him and leaves to Murat the task of holding Schwarzenberg. The latter brings pressure to bear on Murat; the Emperor decides to join him and leaves Ney to deal with Blücher. Loss of Westphalia and defection of Bavaria. Napoleon's plan. The plain of Leipzig. The situation on the 15th of October, 1813. The 16th of October; a desperate but indecisive battle in the south; Blücher held with difficulty in the north. Napoleon contemplates retreating. Bernadotte's arrival in the north. The army falls back on Leipzig and gives battle on the 18th in its new position. The treachery of the Saxons opens a breach. Napoleon organises the retreat; battle in the suburbs; the bridge across the Elster. The retreat. The Bavarians try to intercept it at Hanau; Napoleon cuts his way through. Return to Mayence. The Emperor hands the army over to his Marshals and sets out for Paris. Farewell to the Rhine.

**N**APOLEON found himself confronted by a force of almost a million men, while he himself had barely half that number. Three formidable Allied armies were converging on the line of the Elbe, where he was to face them single-handed.

As he felt that the Bohemian Army required his special attention he had left his General Headquarters at Dresden. On

**Arrangement of the French Armies.** his right he had placed Gouvion Saint-Cyr, whom he regarded as a good sound soldier and the impetuous Vandamme, one on each side of the upper Elbe to guard the Bohemian passes. To the east of the river and much further afield Mac-

donald, Lauriston and Ney were to hold Blücher on the Katzbach. The Imperial Guard and the three cavalry corps were in the neighbourhood of Bautzen, holding themselves in readiness for

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

any emergency. On the left, to stop and, if necessary, drive Bernadotte back to Berlin, he had Oudinot, Bertrand and Reynier; they were to join up with Davout, who was still at Hamburg, but when the great counter-attack was made, he was to come and take command of the whole of this strong left wing.

It was Blücher—General “Vorwärts”—who opened the conflict; with his usual brutality he violated the armistice, which did not expire until the 18th of August, and as early as the 16th took Ney by surprise and drove him back. Napoleon, hastening to the rescue, saved the situation, and on the 22nd forced the Prussian

**Blücher**  
**Driven Back.** General to retire behind the Katzbach. While he was preparing to give him a severer lesson, he learnt that Schwarzenberg's army had already appeared in the defiles and he returned to Görlitz to find that almost the whole of the Bohemian Army was already in Saxony. The Allied Sovereigns were with Schwarzenberg; unfortunately the Tsar, a mere novice in the art of war, had Moreau at his elbow to advise him. The army was advancing behind Dresden, hoping to surround the French there while Napoleon was still occupied with Blücher on the Katzbach. The manœuvre seemed to be progressing favourably, and Gouvion Saint-Cyr, under pressure of these overwhelming forces, was obliged to fall back on Dresden with his troops intact.

The Emperor did not appear to be the least disquieted—on the contrary! The enemy's advance suggested an audacious plan to his mind. He would allow Schwarzenberg to march up behind Dresden with his whole army, and while Gouvion was to hold his ground and keep the foe at bay for a few days, he himself, with 100,000 men, would slip round to the south of the town and, joining Vandamme, would glide along the Bohemian mountains, seize the passes and cut the enemy's communications, whereupon he would turn back in a north-westerly direction and fall upon the rear of his reckless foe. He would surround their forces and at one fell swoop take the whole of the Allied General Staff and the two Emperors prisoner. All he asked of Gouvion was to hold out for a few days; everything depended on his being able to do so.

From now onwards we must resign ourselves to seeing the Emperor's most brilliant plans failing owing to the lack of under-

## DRESDEN AND LEIPZIG

standing or pusillanimity of his lieutenants, even the best of them. When Gouvion arrived in Dresden he found the garrison

**Consternation in Dresden.** in a state of incredible consternation, which had the effect of unnerving him, too. They were going

to be attacked and crushed in the city—of that they were certain—and when the Marshal received the Emperor's instructions he returned an extremely cold reply. Napoleon then sent Gourgaud to Dresden, but apparently he, too, quickly succumbed to the spirit of depression that prevailed there. But if Dresden could not be relied upon the whole plan fell to the ground. And he forthwith abandoned it. Making direct for Dresden with his 100,000 men, he merely left Vandamme in the camp at Pirna, which commanded the Peterswald road, the main

**Napoleon's Change of Plan.**

route to Bohemia. At a given signal he was to fall upon Schwarzenberg's army after it had been defeated by the Emperor and forced to retreat. On the 26th Napoleon entered Dresden and was hailed as deliverer by the 40,000 men he found there.

Schwarzenberg took the offensive. He did not attack until the morning of the 27th. During the hours of respite thus afforded

**Schwarzenberg Attacks Dresden.**

the defence works of the city had been rapidly and admirably organised, and were hardly touched. Part of the suburbs and the adjoining *Gross Garten* were taken to shouts of "*Nach Paris!*" but were recaptured by a determined counter-attack, which

in the evening finally drove the enemy back, discomfited, to his original positions. Already Schwarzenberg, in agreement with Moreau, who was still the temporiser of yore, was talking of putting a stop to the fight and retiring. Since Napoleon was there—and had given ample evidence of his presence!—by persisting in the attack they would be failing in the general plan of campaign they had agreed to adopt.

But Austria was no longer mistress of the situation. Napoleon had decided on a violent counter-attack for the 27th. He

**French Counter-Attack.**

had already thought out and determined upon the manœuvre which was to break up the army confronting him; from the top of a belfry he had noticed towards the right of the semi-circle of hills a fairly

deep gorge, the Plauen ravine, which separated the enemy's left,

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

almost the whole of the Austrian Army, from the rest of the Allies. If by a vigorous attack the Austrians could be driven back on this gorge they could be hurled into it. The enemy's line would then be broken, which would allow the French to attack the centre in the rear, while Napoleon, falling on their right with the Guard, would endeavour to cut them off from the Freiberg road, the only way of retreat open to them, with the exception of the Peterswald road, which, as we know, Vandamme had been told to occupy.

Victor was given orders to advance against the Austrians with the support of the whole of Murat's horse. On that day, for one brief moment, Murat was to win back his old reputation as a great cavalry leader. Meanwhile, a hundred guns grouped in the French centre were to belch forth fire against the enemy's artillery.

On the morning of the 27th, under cover of a thick fog, Murat advanced with the whole of his cavalry corps to the very foot of the ridge, where, unconscious of the danger, the Austrians were apparently not expecting the French so soon. Before long Victor joined the King of Naples and in the twinkling of an eye everything was confusion. So furious was the French assault, in which Murat shone conspicuously, that after a few moments of violent fighting the whole of Prince Aloys von Liechtenstein's corps was driven back and brought to bay, according to plan, at the mouth of the Plauen ravine and then hurled into the gorge. Murat and Victor took thousands of prisoners; in a couple of hours they already amounted to no less than 12,000. The disaster to the Allies' left was total and complete.

The French centre had been content with a savage bombardment of the enemy's centre, where Schwarzenberg and the two Emperors were posted. A shot fell right in the middle of this group, and Napoleon, from his post of vantage, saw through his glasses a commotion which puzzled him. He would have been thunderstruck had he been told that his enemy Moreau, whom he believed to be still in America, had just been mortally wounded by the side of the Tsar, who only escaped a similar fate by the skin of his teeth.

A counter-attack, ordered by Schwarzenberg, was being carried out somewhat half-heartedly in the centre, when the

## DRESDEN AND LEIPZIG

Generalissimo learnt of the disaster that had overtaken his left. He immediately decided to retreat; it was imperative to get back to Bohemia as quickly as possible. The Allies had left 27,000 men on the field of battle, while Napoleon had lost only 8,000 men. Thus the latter had gained a brilliant victory.

But the Emperor regarded these two days as merely the first acts of the drama, for the final scene of which he hoped Vandamme was preparing the way by barring the Peterswald road to the vanquished foe.

As a matter of fact, the Allies were fleeing headlong in the utmost disorder along all the roads by which they could possibly reach Bohemia. The two Russian corps which had remained on the Peterswald road might, at any rate, have been destroyed there if Vandamme, descending cautiously from the camp at Pirna, had intervened in time to cut them off. But when he saw the mass of troops surging back on him, he was terrified, and though generally reckless and impetuous, he was afraid of being swept away by the torrent and hesitated to advance. When Napoleon himself arrived at Pirna he found his lieutenant there still hesitating, having allowed one of the finest opportunities for covering himself with glory by completing the defeat of the Allies to slip through his fingers.

Nevertheless, the Allies were still in an extremely precarious position. As soon as he reached Pirna, Napoleon was preparing to take command of the whole pursuit when news received from other parts of the huge battlefield pulled him up short. It was bad news, both from Macdonald, who had been left to face Blücher, and from Oudinot, who had been rushed along the road to Berlin. It would have been extremely rash of him, in the circumstances, to go any further south, and handing over to Vandamme the task of keeping close on the heels of the fleeing foe and overwhelming and annihilating him, he himself returned to Dresden.

Vandamme, anxious to make up for his mistake of the previous day, hurled himself energetically in pursuit of the enemy's columns and climbed the mountains after them. But when the Allied leaders, feeling their forces melting away in the rout, rounded on him and tried to make a stand at Kulm, Vandamme, in his turn, found himself

**Vandamme  
Hesitates.**

**Bad News  
from the  
North.**

**Vandamme  
in Pursuit.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

in an extremely awkward predicament, for, while he was already experiencing considerable difficulty in holding his own, a Prussian corps, which had lost its way in the mountains, quite by chance fell upon him in the rear and spread panic through his ranks. He, in his turn, endeavoured to cut his way through the Prussians, but, in suddenly wheeling round, his divisions were thrown into confusion, and one of them was surrounded and captured. In this unfortunate affray the General himself was taken, and the

**Vandamme  
Taken  
Prisoner.** French lost altogether 12,000 men killed or taken prisoner. True, it was a small number compared with the 38,000 men the Allies had lost in four days, but this unexpected success was quite enough to restore their morale, which had been severely undermined. Moreover, the incident confirmed them in their belief that, even if they were defeated by Napoleon, they could always make certain of taking their revenge on his lieutenants, more especially as the idea, suggested by the wretched Moreau, was not only justified at Kulm, but had also just been even more fully justified in the east and the north.

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The news which had made Napoleon stop short at Pirna had been confirmed at Dresden.

Macdonald had allowed himself to be surprised behind the Katzbach by Blücher, who had returned to the attack, and had fallen back on to the Bober. At one moment, it even looked as though his army corps, retreating in the most horrible weather, was melting away, and the Marshal had succeeded in taking up his position on the Bober only after having lost nearly 20,000 men during the rout.

Meanwhile Oudinot, sent along the road to Berlin, had advanced with a timidity and apprehension astonishing in so valiant a soldier; he seemed to have been half paralysed with fear! Bernadotte, whose army might have hampered his march, had refrained from doing so; he was holding back for private reasons of his own. But Bülow, who with his Prussian corps had been placed under his command—as a matter of fact, for the purpose of urging him

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on—had rushed forward and had single-handed inflicted such a reverse on Oudinot at Grossbeeren that the latter, completely demoralised, had beaten a precipitate retreat with his troops to find safety under the guns of Wittenberg.

**Oudinot  
Retreats.**

On reaching Dresden, under the lash of this bad news, Napoleon hesitated for a moment between the two battlefields that were claiming his attention. In the end he decided not to undertake the march on Berlin; the news of the minor disaster at Kulm had reached him meanwhile and made him feel he ought not to go too far away from Bohemia. He contented himself with replacing Oudinot by Ney, with orders to continue the advance that had been interrupted. He himself set out against Blücher, who, on hearing of his approach, beat a retreat—for General "Vorwärts" could go backwards if he chose. And Napoleon drove him back to the Katzbach at the point of the sword.

**Blücher  
Driven Back.**

But at this juncture it was reported that Schwarzenberg had resumed the offensive. The Emperor, who, after driving back Blücher, had intended to join Ney on the road to Berlin, was obliged to abandon the idea. This was all the more unfortunate seeing that Ney, in his turn, ran up against Bülow near Dennewitz, and betrayed by the stampede of the Saxons and Bavarians who had been placed under his command, had been discomfited and obliged, like Oudinot, to retreat. For the time being the march on Berlin had to be abandoned. Moreover, Napoleon felt that the Allies were preparing a much more comprehensive manœuvre which demanded the whole of his attention.

The object of this manœuvre was to bring the three main Allied armies together right on his rear near Leipzig. The Allied General Staff felt the time had now come to carry out the last part of Moreau's advice; as Napoleon's lieutenants had each in turn been defeated and his army had been weakened by so many blows, it had become possible to attack the Great Man himself with more confidence. The Emperor now had barely 250,000 men to set against the 600,000 whom the Allies were about to concentrate at Leipzig. Not for a single moment did he contemplate beating a retreat. He accepted the battle—it was on the fields round Leipzig that the fate of Europe was at last to be decided.

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## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Napoleon had no difficulty in seeing through his adversary's game, and as a result he concentrated his forces round Dresden. Meanwhile Blücher, after making demonstrations to deceive Macdonald, suddenly made for the bend of the Elbe just below

### **The Bohemian Army Returns.**

Wittenberg, where Bülow, who was theoretically under Bernadotte's command, was awaiting him. At the same moment the Bohemian Army was making its appearance in all the mountain passes. The Emperor, on being informed, but not knowing in which direction—north or south—the main attack would be launched, detached two strong bodies from his armies. He confided the one destined for the south to Murat with orders to hold Schwarzenberg's army with 40,000 men. To deal with the northern armies he increased Ney's forces to the same figure. After which he sent Marmont's corps of 30,000 men to Leipzig to reinforce, if need be, either Ney or Murat. He reserved 75,000 men for himself, to be rushed to the support of Marmont either north or south as circumstances demanded. Augereau, who had been kicking his heels in Bavaria, was also to bring his 12,000 men to Leipzig.

Blücher reached the Elbe opposite Wartenburg on the 2nd of October. Bertrand, who tried to prevent him from crossing, was betrayed by the sudden defection of his Württembergian division,

### **Bernadotte Advances.**

and the Silesian Army crossed the river. Meanwhile the northern army—Bernadotte's army—crossed it further down between Dessau and Barby, and Ney was obliged to fall back between the Elbe and the Mulde. As the situation in the north was apparently the more critical, Napoleon decided to go there himself, intending to descend along both sides of the Mulde until he arrived between Blücher and Bernadotte, whom he would attack one after the other. He sent Ney forward again, while Marmont came up to his support. He himself went to Düben, intending to take personal command of operations there. But at that very moment he was

### **Murat Retreats.**

informed by Murat that the Bohemian Army was advancing into Saxony. So confident was the Emperor of defeating the others that he merely instructed the King of Naples to retire slowly and lure Schwarzenberg on.

## DRESDEN AND LEIPZIG

But the Bohemian Army was pressing hard on Murat and forcing him to retreat in haste, with the result that the King of Naples began to lose confidence. The Emperor, afraid of a sudden serious weakening in this direction, left the northern battle to Ney and decided to go towards Murat, whom he ordered to fall back slowly on Leipzig, whither Marmont had been sent to support him. Ney, Reynier, Macdonald and Bertrand were also to fall back on Leipzig from the north. Thus the 200,000 men whom Napoleon still had at his disposal would by the 15th be concentrated to the north and south of Leipzig confronting 300,000 assailants. True, the latter had not yet effected contact, but they were endeavouring to do so, and with this object in view Blücher launched Thielmann's light cavalry to the west of Leipzig.

Napoleon was now in a most terrifying position, and it was at this very moment that he received, both from north and south Germany, news that was calculated to cause him the greatest anxiety, for it warned him that in case of defeat it would be difficult, if not impossible, for him to retreat.

### **Westphalia Invaded.**

Westphalia had been invaded by one of the cavalry corps that Bernadotte had detached from his right, and King Jerome, seized with panic, had deserted his capital without firing a shot, with the result that his kingdom was falling about his ears. Moreover, Bavaria, worked upon by

### **Defection of Bavaria.**

the Coalition agents for the last five months, had suddenly deserted the French alliance and gone over to the enemy. This not only meant the immediate release of the Austrian corps of 30,000 men which had been keeping Bavaria "under observation," but also the addition of 30,000 Bavarians to the ranks of the Allies. Furthermore, these 60,000 men, though temporarily surrounded, might, in the event of a retreat, block the only road by which the French army could retire, since Westphalia was now in the hands of the enemy.

Whatever one's attitude towards Napoleon, it is impossible not to be moved to whole-hearted admiration of the coolness and serenity with which, according to all accounts, he met so terrible a predicament. Caught between two fires, threatened with annihilation, betrayed by circumstances and even at this early

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

stage, by his fellow-men, he still aspired to victory. For him it was all-important that Ney and the rest should hold Blücher for three days in the north. He himself would deal with Schwarzenberg,

**Napoleon  
Encourages  
His Marshals.**

whom he intended to drive back, outflank on the right, and annihilate; after which he would leave the remnants of this army to their sorry fate, and turn back on the northern armies. During the night of the 15th to the 16th of October—the vigil before battle—he had an interview with his astonished Marshals in which highly philosophic reflections on his destiny, illustrated by reminiscences of his past life, alternated with affectionate outpourings to his “old comrades,” while by the cordiality and brisk good cheer of his conversation he endeavoured to restore their morale, which he could not fail to see was flagging before the battle had even begun. He expected a supreme effort from them—together with him they were going to save France. They left this strange gathering temporarily cheered and fortified, though they still remained gloomy, for nobody, except the Emperor, had recovered the dash and spirit of the great and glorious years the memory of which he had just been conjuring up.

To the south the plain of Leipzig is intersected by the Pleisse and the Elster, which meet above Leipzig. These rivers, like the

**The Plain of  
Leipzig.**

Salle further west, branch out, and Napoleon’s right wing facing Schwarzenberg was covered by them. But it was difficult to find any protection for the front of an army, for the plain was almost perfectly flat. However, south of the French line, which stretched from Mark-Kleeberg, on the Pleisse, to Liebert-Wolkwitz, further east, there was a shallow depression separating the two armies. For the left wing of the French army and the right wing of Schwarzenberg’s there was no cover whatever. And it was here that the Austrian Commander-in-Chief hoped to effect contact with Blücher, who was advancing towards him, though it was here, too, that Napoleon intended to outflank the Austrians who had been left somewhat “high and dry” there.

In the north the forces that were retiring before Blücher and Bernadotte had a better chance of making a stand, for between Möckern and Eutritsch there was a ridge which dominated and held the key to the road from Halle to Leipzig, by which the

## DRESDEN AND LEIPZIG

enemy meant to reach the latter city. Marmont had taken up his position at Möckern on the left, while Ney, who with the corps under Souham, Bertrand, Reynier and Dombrowski, was still retreating, was to make a stand with his back to the ridge on the right of Marmont.

Altogether Napoleon had 185,000 men with whom to confront 320,000 of the enemy. But he had faith not only in his own genius

### **Grim Determination of Both Sides.**

but also in the spirit of his men, which was magnificent in its grim determination. As a matter of fact, the ardour of the other side was just as great, Prussians, Austrians and Russians alike displaying an almost ferocious resolution which in the case of the Prussians amounted to fury. As a matter of fact, the Emperor's last hope lay in the calculated deliberation with which Bernadotte, who was a long way behind Blücher, was advancing towards the field of battle. The Crown Prince had made up his mind that if Napoleon crushed Schwarzenberg on the first day, he would stop his march and beat a retreat. Thus everything depended on the fighting in the south. If things turned out badly for the Bohemian Army Napoleon's final victory was assured, but if the issue remained undecided, he would inevitably be condemned to defeat—perhaps to complete annihilation.

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Napoleon was so firmly convinced of this that, hearing nothing further about Blücher's advance, he ordered Marmont on the 16th to leave his position and come and take part in the southern battle, where he was to support Macdonald in turning the enemy's

### **Schwarzenberg Attacks.**

right. At nine o'clock on the morning of the 16th the fighting began. Schwarzenberg took the initiative, hurling his corps against the whole of the French line, which, though it held firm at some points, seemed from the outset to have been outflanked on the right. Moreover, two attacks were made on the extreme French right and rear; the former, conducted by Gyulai, aimed at barring the road to Erfurt, while the latter was made by Blücher's advance guard, who had hurled themselves against Marmont before he had been able—fortunately—to obey Napoleon's orders and evacuate his position. He held his ground, determined not to go south until

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Ney had come up to relieve him in the north. At last Ney arrived and took his place in the battle, and Napoleon, thinking his position was very strong, felt he could deprive him of Bertrand's corps to repulse Gyulai's attack on his own extreme right. For the moment these two points seemed secure. But feeling that Blücher was on the way, the Emperor decided that before three o'clock the Bohemian Army must at all costs be repulsed, surrounded and annihilated.

He accordingly launched a strong counter-attack against the enemy's front, while Macdonald—and victory depended entirely on the successful execution of this manoeuvre—was to do his best to turn Schwarzenberg's right wing. The frontal attack was magnificently executed and the Allied line was apparently broken. The first position having been taken and the French installed in it, the Tsar regarded the battle as lost and talked of retreating. But Macdonald, whom Marmont, as we know, had been unable to support,

**A Battle of Positions.** failed in the task allotted to him, and in a few hours was brought to a standstill. Thus the battle remained one of positions; the fighting was terrific; the Allied lines were taken, lost, and taken again, and both sides were wearing themselves out. Night was approaching without there being any signs of a decision, and when, after further ferocious fighting, darkness fell, Schwarzenberg's army, though rudely buffeted, had not been turned or even definitely driven back. Thus it could hardly be regarded as defeated. Meanwhile Blücher, who had been more or less successfully held during this first day of fighting, was already pressing the French so hard in the north that their line had more than once been on the point of giving way, with the result that, since the Bohemian Army was for the time being exhausted, the Silesian Army seemed to constitute the greatest menace for the following day. But this force,

**A Day's Respite.** too, had suffered such heavy losses that, like the Austrian Army, it made no attempt to attack on the 17th; throughout that day all that occurred was a terrific bombardment.

This gave Napoleon time to review the situation. As early as the evening of the 16th he had made a tour of Staff Headquarters

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where he had been greeted with looks of consternation; all were agreed that the battle should be stopped and an immediate retreat begun. He was forced to acquiesce, but, although resigned to the idea, he wished the retreat to be orderly and therefore impressive. He might perhaps have begun it during the night of the 16th to the 17th; but Reynier's corps, which was holding some of Bernadotte's forces further north, had not yet joined the main body, and the Emperor had no intention of deserting these heroes by beating too hasty a retreat. Moreover, he had instructed the Austrian General Merveldt, who had been taken prisoner, to go to the Allies with the offer of an armistice, which Merveldt had a vague hope would be accepted, since the enemy had been sorely tried.

### **Napoleon Decides to Retreat.**

But the Allies knew that before many more hours had elapsed they would receive extremely strong reinforcements; Schwarzenberg was awaiting a Russian corps under Benning-sen, who was hastening by forced marches from Bohemia, while Bernadotte, whom the events of the 16th had at length decided to come to grips, was at last advancing from the north; and it was this Frenchman who was destined to give the *coup de grâce* to his own countrymen. On the evening of the 17th, from every observation post, the French leaders, to their consternation, beheld long columns making their appearance both from the south and the north—50,000 Russians under Benningsen from the south and from the north the whole of Bernadotte's army. If the Bavarians were allowed time to fall upon the French line of retreat there was danger of Napoleon's forces being surrounded. In any case, on the 18th they were menaced with being caught in a vice, and to make matters worse a spirit of treachery was breathing in the ranks of the few German corps that were still attached to the French army; as early as the 17th some Saxon officers in Reynier's corps slipped over to Bernadotte's headquarters, and the latter was already aware that, during the following day's fighting, there would be at least one point where treachery would help to break the resistance of the French. And the exalted traitor meant to make full use of it.

Meanwhile, Napoleon was making preparations for evacuating the field of battle by closing the wide circle still formed by his

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troops a few miles north and south of Leipzig. After having taken up fresh positions preparatory to falling back, they were to retreat and fight only if they were attacked; if they were left unmolested they were to gain the suburbs in good order and then the heart of the city, whence the whole army was to begin its westward march.

**Napoleon  
Falls Back on  
Leipzig.**

By dawn on the 18th the Allied armies were on the move, all converging on the new positions taken up by the French during the night. The latter, in obedience to orders, were falling back, but fighting as they did so. From time to time one of their corps would halt, turn on the enemy, repulse him, and then continue the retreat. As a matter of fact, they were retiring under a hail of bullets and a hurricane of shot and shell, for they were surrounded by a circle of fire and subjected to a bombardment unparalleled within human memory. Nevertheless, they retreated on the town without allowing their line to be broken. The men, harassed and hard-pressed, with cannon-balls and grape-shot falling right and left of them, fought like heroes—"like madmen," declared one of their adversaries. Against Blücher and Bernadotte, as well as against Schwarzenberg they showed no trace of weakness, and

**Treachery of  
the Saxons.**

at no point was there any sign of the line giving way, when suddenly a serious incident occurred, destined to win undying but far from enviable fame. Reynier's corps, which had at last joined Ney north of Leipzig, was confronting the enemy with two French divisions and one Saxon division, and had fallen back on Paunsdorf in order to hold Bernadotte's troops, who had become dangerous. They were rushed forward to make a counter-attack, but the Saxons, as soon as they met the enemy, waved the butt end of their muskets in the air and flung themselves into the adversary's ranks, the cavalry and the infantry dragging the artillery in their train. Not content with defecting, these 10,000 deserters immediately turned their guns on to their comrades of Durutte's division, by whose side they had been fighting continuously for over a year, and literally cut them to bits. Durutte's unfortunate men, thus treacherously assaulted, flung themselves in disorder on to Ney's army, and with Bernadotte's troops, as well as the blackguards who had betrayed them on their heels, they caused such confusion

## DRESDEN AND LEIPZIG

that the northern front suddenly gave way. It was necessary to rush Marmont forward to support Ney and help him, with the utmost difficulty, to repair the breach in the line of retreat; Napoleon, on being informed, was obliged to send troops to complete the task of filling up the gap thus opened which Blücher was doing his utmost to enlarge. Moreover, leaving Murat in charge of the southern battle, which was now fizzling out, the Emperor went himself to support the line which an act of treachery had dismantled.

Meanwhile Blücher and Bernadotte had effected contact, and the French cavalry were obliged to make furious charges in order to prevent these 300,000 men from again breaking the front which had been more or less restored. They succeeded in doing this and on the evening of the 18th, the enemy securely held and sorely depleted—they had lost 60,000 men during these three days while the French had only 20,000 put out of action—found it impossible to break the line of the heroic army, the whole of which was now backing on Leipzig, full of a grim determination to hold out at all costs.

Retreat—immediate and swift retreat—was now imperative, and Napoleon entered the town for the sole purpose of organising it. It was anything but an easy operation, as it had to be carried out while the battle was still in full swing. In order to cover the departure of their comrades and to make their own escape possible, a few corps were told off to hold the suburbs, into which the French forces were falling back from all directions during the night of the 18th and 19th. As soon as the main body had crossed the great bridge across the Elster, the heroic defenders of the suburbs were to enter the town and endeavour, in their turn, to get across the river. As soon as the last corps had done so, Colonel Montfort, a sapper of the Guards, was to blow up the bridge which had been carefully mined during the previous night.

On the morning of the 19th the congestion, complicated by the first signs of panic, was so great on the high-road, which was broken up by small bridges, that Napoleon himself had some difficulty in cutting his way through.

Meanwhile the battle was raging furiously in the suburbs, where



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the corps under Reynier, Macdonald, Poniatowski and Lauriston, sadly depleted—they numbered 20,000 men all told—were putting up a desperate resistance. As the enemy seemed for the time being to be held and even repulsed, the heroic defenders were preparing to cross the Elster when suddenly the bridge blew up. A non-commissioned officer, entrusted with the task of setting light to the fuses at the first glimpse of the enemy, had probably mistaken

**Poniatowski's Tragedy at the Bridge.** Poniatowski's lancers for Austrian cavalry and in a mad panic had blown up the structure, exposing 20,000 men and two Marshals (Poniatowski had been given his baton a few days previously) to

capture by the enemy. Numbers jumped into the water, but the river was swollen by recent floods and the current was very strong. By a miracle Macdonald managed to reach the right bank, but Poniatowski had a seizure and perished in the water, while Lauriston and Reynier, who were the last to reach the bank, hard-pressed by the enemy, were forced to surrender; 12,000 to 15,000 men, driven to bay, were taken prisoner—a lamentable epilogue to this four days' battle, this Battle of the Nations, in which the armies of ten countries had been engaged; 100,000 dead and wounded remained on the field, while it was clear that Napoleon's fortunes had foundered almost beyond redress.

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Nevertheless, the retreat, constantly menaced with being intercepted, was carried out without too many losses between

**The Retreat Continued.** Leipzig and Erfurt. But it remained to reach Mayence from Erfurt without mishap, for while the Leipzig victors, Schwarzenberg and Blücher,

were organising a pursuit—which, as a matter of fact, they started too late in the day to constitute an immediate menace and which they never succeeded in making overwhelmingly formidable—the threat which, from the very beginning, had been hanging over the heads of the hapless army on its retreat became ever more clearly defined as the hours sped by. The 60,000 Austro-Bavarians, placed under the command of Baron von Wrede, whom Napoleon had made a General and a Count of the Empire, were advancing on Frankfort with the object of reaching the town before the

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French and barring the way. Fortunately, Wrede, who had proved a good subordinate in the imperial army, was somewhat of a novice in the High Command. He could easily have reached the district between the Maine and the Rhine three days ahead of Napoleon and, having chosen a strong position and fortified it, could definitely have cut off the French retreat. But he delayed and muddled matters, with the result that he only just managed to reach Hanau a few hours before the French army and hastily installed himself there. Nevertheless, the French were in an extremely perilous position; out of the 60,000 to 65,000 men he was leading back, broken, ill and exhausted, Napoleon had only 15,000 able-bodied combatants. True, the majority of them were Guards and that was enough!

### **Wrede Tries to Intercept Napoleon.**

On the 30th of October they ran into Wrede's troops, which, as a matter of fact, the latter had not arranged at all skilfully. The attack, on the other hand, was organised by a master hand, and broke down the enemy's resistance. The artillery, the whole of which had been concentrated under Drouot's command, wrought such havoc in the Bavarian lines that the whole of Wrede's little army was thrown into confusion.

### **Wrede Defeated.**

It fell back, was again attacked, and, its leader having been seriously wounded, allowed the French to get through.

On the 4th of November, 1813, after a retreat lasting a fortnight, the whole of the French Army was in Mayence. Of the 300,000 whom Napoleon had led or summoned to Germany only 60,000 remained.

The Emperor, after doing his best to organise the defence of the Rhine on the left bank, left Victor, Marmont, Macdonald and Mortier to carry on. They were to hold their own behind the river for the three months Napoleon required for raising a fresh army of 300,000 men behind the protection thus afforded. Moreover, the Emperor had one last hope. He had left 190,000 men behind, scattered in ten strongholds between the Elbe and the Vistula, from Dresden where Gouvion was still shut up, to Hamburg which was occupied by Davout, and Danzig which was held by Rapp. And he sent orders to the Generals who

### **Napoleon Leaves the Marshals in Charge.**

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had been thus left behind in Germany to move heaven and earth to break through the Allied blockade of these strongholds, which in most cases was somewhat slack, and to join forces and return at all costs to the Rhine. If they succeeded, the Emperor would be reinforced by nearly 200,000 extremely fit and experienced men, and on returning to the Rhine would have something better than a mere body of conscripts with which to renew the fight and defend the frontiers of France against invasion.

But he was doomed to disappointment. After various vain attempts to carry out their orders, these magnificent troops remained paralysed far away from the Rhine and were not available for the defence of their country. In these circumstances, could it be conducted for any length of time on the Rhine itself?

### **French Forces Held Up in Germany.**

The Emperor regarded this merely as a further reason for rushing to Paris, where once again he would attempt to make the legions he required spring out of the soil of France. On the 7th of November he left the imperial palace at Mayence doubtless casting a pensive glance on the magnificent river, that Rhine which, four times before he himself had done so, the armies of France had crossed and which he too had crossed four times at their head. But for a whole century the French armies were to be kept away from it; it was not until a hundred and five years later that they crossed it by the Castel bridge. As for Napoleon, never again was he to set eyes on the Rhine!

But such a possibility never for one moment entered his head; for this marvellous man still believed that, with the support of a country like France, his as yet indefatigable genius would succeed in wresting from Fortune the prize which, after the bestowal of so many favours, she had for the last two years stubbornly refused to place within his grasp.

**SOURCES** (XLIV and XLV). *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XXV). Lecestre, *Lettres inédites. Correspondance de maréchal Davout*. Pernit (soldier), *Lettres*, published by M. De Roche de Teilloy. Memoirs and Reminiscences by the Comte de Damas, Metternich, General Thiébaud (V), General Marbot (III), Chiapowski, Vitrolles, Marshal Macdonald, Marshal Marmont, Captain Bertrand, Princess Radziwill, General Grueber, Molé, and Thibaudeau. Clausewitz, *Der Feldzug von 1813*. Jomini, *Campagne de 1813*. Weil, *Le prince Eugène et Murat* (*Correspondance*).

**WORKS.** Those already mentioned by Sorel (VIII), Driault (V), Masson (VIII, IX), Lacour-Gayet, Madelin, and Pingaud. Bertin, *Campagne de 1813*. Comte Lefebvre de Béhaine, *Napoléon et les Alliés sur le Rhin*. General Tournès, *Lützen*. Foucart, *Bautzen*. Pierron, *Napoléon de Dresde à Leipzig*. Heilmann, *Wrede*.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### THE ALLIES ON THE RHINE

France demoralised. Royalist intrigues. Growing hostility in the Assemblies. The country depressed. The Grand Empire crumbling to bits. Murat prepares his defection. The Allies halt at the Rhine. The defence of the Rhine; the Marshals not to be relied upon. Why the Allies halted; fearing an uprising in France they arranged the Frankfort farce in order to throw dust in the enemy's eyes. The myth of the "natural boundaries." Interview between the Allied Ministers and Saint-Aignan. The "bases of Frankfort." Napoleon with great difficulty raises a fresh army; the country's inertia. Talleyrand in favour of the Bourbons. Saint-Aignan in Paris. Caulaincourt Minister for Foreign Affairs; he advises the Emperor to accept the "bases"; the Emperor demands a proper Congress; the Allies evade the issue; Napoleon consents to the "bases." He is informed that his reply is too late. The Declaration of Frankfort. Napoleon prepares for war; measures with regard to Spain and Italy. The Emperor awaits his armies.

**W**OULD the country respond to its great leader's confidence? Everything depended on this. True, France was tired out after twenty-one years of almost incessant war; but so often in the course of her history had she proved herself capable of successfully confronting a mortal menace that there was every ground for hope. Moreover, she was less "exhausted" than historians have time and again declared. Those twenty-one years of war had cost her far less than the four years of fighting a century later were destined to do. It would be easy to produce statistics to prove this. But the last levies gave rise to the gravest apprehension; it was asserted that the country was going to be "drained dry," and, since she believed herself to be so, France clearly was exhausted.

She was morally exhausted. Though between 1795 and 1799 she had lost her lust for liberty, her lust for glory had survived for some years longer. But recently even her lust for glory had evaporated. The people had long since become bored with the war, and the further it receded from the frontiers of France the less enthusiasm did it

**France Tired  
of War.**

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inspire. And when after so many years of conquest it again flowed back to them it found a tired and disillusioned country which the marvellous inspiration of 1792 and 1793 seemed no longer capable of rousing.

Furthermore, since the working classes considered they had been bled dry, the bourgeoisie, so long exempt, felt, as I have already observed, that they too were now threatened with having to sacrifice their sons to the "Minotaur"; they consequently started anathematising the losses which hitherto had hardly affected them. But while the peasants could only murmur, the bourgeoisie, above all in Paris, were able to make their voices heard, and their complaints, re-echoing far and wide, spread demoralisation through the country.

The Royalists endeavoured to turn this disaffection to account, but, as they themselves were forced to acknowledge, they were confronted by the callous indifference with which their Princes were regarded. "Most of us do not even know their names," one young soldier wrote; and yet he was of noble birth! And Chateaubriand confessed that when he talked about the Royal Family he "might as well have been enumerating the offspring of the Chinese Emperor." Nevertheless, the Polignacs, still, as a matter of principle, detained in their "sanatorium," were able, owing to Savary's incurable blindness, to entertain a regular little aristocratic coterie who, fully determined to prepare for grand days ahead, were working the provinces. They were the leaders of that curious organisation, consisting of *Les Chevaliers de la Foi* and *Les Bannières du Roi*, the existence of which was revealed by the last historian of the Restoration, who derived his information from the *Souvenirs* of their founder, Berthier de Sauvigny. At the end of 1813 this group sent one of their number, Saint-Victor, to England to warn the Princes to hold themselves in readiness. The Duc d'Angoulême immediately set out to join the Anglo-Spanish forces which were on the point of crossing the Pyrenees. Royalist agents also began to scour the country for the purpose of increasing the disaffection and sowing the seeds of panic. Savary took no notice.

The fact of the matter was that, although he was one of the most sincere and devoted supporters of the Emperor and his

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**The Ministers Demoralised.** régime, he too had been infected by the demoralisation which was unfortunately undermining even the imperial organism itself—an extremely ominous sign. From Cambacérès, the Arch-Chancellor, down to the most insignificant sub-Prefect, the whole of the official world, with but few exceptions, had caught the contagion and was already almost paralysed by uncertainty where it was not actually riddled by intrigue.

**The Assemblies Hostile.** The Assemblies were now secretly hostile. In the lobbies of the Senate retaliation for prolonged obsequiousness found vent in the most acrimonious resolutions; the most disgruntled of all, however, were the deputies. Though they all owed their election to the Emperor's protection, they now suddenly discovered

**The Bourgeoisie Disaffected.** that they were imbued with the spirit of Brutus; men like Lafné, Clausel de Coussergues and Raynouard declared themselves revolted by the "despotism" of which they had been the beneficiaries. They were merely the leaders of the chorus; for the whole of the bourgeoisie suddenly developed a passion for liberty, which, from the Palais de Justice to the Bourse, found expression in a rebellious attitude and came to the support of the heroic sentiments suddenly breathed forth from the Luxembourg and the Palais Bourbon.

**The Masses Loyal.** True, the mass of the people, the peasants, the workers and the petty bourgeoisie, remained whole-heartedly devoted to Napoleon. They could not forget the benefits conferred upon them and, moreover, found it impossible to imagine any other régime than his. But, as I have already pointed out, these same masses had been rendered incapable of spontaneous action and grand impulses by the autocratic nature of the régime itself. They relied entirely on the "genius"

of the Emperor, which they constantly repeated would protect and save them. When Danton had risen up before the French people crying, "Courage!" armed battalions had sprung up out of the earth because the nation was awaiting this fiery slogan; at the end of 1813 the nation remained unmoved by Napoleon's call for a "mass levy." When eventually it did rise up, half-heartedly and spasmodically, it was too late; already the days of

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the "Grand Emperor" were numbered and with them those of the "Grand Nation."

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And the "Grand Empire" was falling to pieces behind Napoleon as he retreated. Napoleonic Germany was the first to be dissolved; treachery here supported by cowardice there, resulted in the complete disintegration of the Confederation of the Rhine. The French officials of Westphalia and Berg fled to Holland, which they found already on the point of revolting, and where Lebrun, the Emperor's representative, was writing to say that in view of the impending insurrection "his head was forfeit." Amsterdam gave the signal by proclaiming the descendant of the Princes of Orange stadtholder, and Bernadotte's army forthwith entered the town. Molitor, who was in command of the French troops, fell back under the pressure of Bülow's Prussians and had the greatest difficulty in retaining a foothold in the country. The Rhineland, however, held firm; public opinion there was unanimously in favour of the French, and the Prefects wrote proudly declaring that there was no department in the Empire more enthusiastically devoted to France, for the simple reason that from Cologne to Spire "nobody wished to be Prussian." All that Switzerland desired was to get out of the European imbroglio; the *Landamman* Rienhart, who had hitherto been devoted to the Emperor, made up his mind to seek protection for his comparative loyalty behind the wall of neutrality and made this the object of his activities. But Italy was a prey to the most diverse passions.

The Viceroy Eugene, on being sent back from Dresden to Milan, had been able to see with his own eyes the damage the régime had suffered owing to his prolonged absence. True, Italy was not turning to Austria, whom she detested, but certain "patriots" were aiming at driving out the French, if only for the purpose of brandishing in the face of Europe a "national Government" that had cut itself free of Napoleon. While Eugene was being forced by the Austrian armies to fall back on the Piave, all manner of plots were being hatched behind his back. A vast intrigue, of which Naples

**Intrigues in  
Italy.**

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was the hotbed, was spreading its tentacles through the whole of Italy. For, paradoxically enough, it was this city where, together with Murat, one of the Emperor's own sisters held sway, that constituted the main hope of the enemies of the French Empire.

After Leipzig, Joachim had taken a somewhat cold leave of the Emperor and rushed back to Naples, the Roland of yesterday resuming the part of Ganelon. As a matter of fact, the negotiations into which the King of Naples had entered with the Allies had hardly been interrupted, and Metternich already regarded the wretch as a secret ally. As he hurriedly made his way to Naples,

**Murat's Treachery.** Murat's speeches scattered the seeds of anxiety in all the Napoleonic Governments, leaving Élise at her wits' end in Florence and General Miollis

a prey to uncertainty in Rome. True, he everywhere declared that he would return from Naples with an army "to save Italy." But the term was ambiguous. As a matter of fact, his aim was to enter into alliance with the foreign Powers, but with such secrecy that when, in due course, he did actually return to Rome, Florence and Bologna he would be allowed a free passage and even be given command of the French troops he found there. Having thus seized two-thirds of Italy he would be in a position to proclaim himself master of that country, and, according as circumstances dictated at the beginning of 1814, declare either for Austria or for France. As soon as he was home again he once more took up the threads of his negotiations with Austria, in which Caroline, betraying her brother, now encouraged him. Moreover, he resumed communication with Lord William Bentinck and England. Meanwhile, he was writing to the Emperor urging him to grant Italy her independence. He had already mobilised his troops, and it was treachery in its strangest guise that accompanied them on their march. All too soon it was to be revealed; but a hundred and one other plots were being hatched, and, even in the heart of Paris itself, were lurking in the shadows of this twilight of the Empire. It was on these even more than on their formidable armies that the Allies were relying to overthrow their still redoubtable foe.

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It was precisely with this object in view that they had halted on the other side of the Rhine; the majority of European statesmen were anxious to allow the important intrigues to develop in Paris; when the time was ripe the conspirators would facilitate their access to the city and throw open the gates.

**The Allies on the Rhine.**

The Emperor saw the danger, and if he travelled post-haste from Mayence to Saint-Cloud it was because he felt it was urgent to take drastic measures. On the 3rd of November, 1813, as soon as he was once more installed in the Palace, his first endeavour was to restore the confidence of his Ministers and inspire them with fresh courage. But, after he had been a week in Paris, even his own confidence abated.

For he had discovered that, in spite of the most pressing instructions, Clarke had allowed the strongholds on the left bank of the Rhine to remain perilously weak. So distracted had the Minister of War been after Leipzig that he had been incapable of taking any but the most haphazard measures. But if the Marshals found themselves unable to rely on these strongholds they would be left "in mid-air." Moreover, between Bâle and Nimegen Victor, Marmont and Macdonald had only a weak force at their command, 39,000 men all told, divided between their three corps, whose line Molitor's 2,000 men extended into Holland. It was a mere screen of troops. Yet energetic leaders would have been able, at a pinch, to hold their own for the three months the Emperor required. True, they had once been energetic, but all their energy had evaporated. Victor, more especially, proved ready to throw up his hands at the first encounter. Napoleon had been afraid of this; he mistrusted his morale and if, in making his dispositions, he placed him on the right wing, between Bâle and Landau, it was, as he explained, because he was convinced that the enemy would not launch an attack in that quarter, but between Wesel and Cologne, and he relied on Macdonald, who was placed in this left sector, to deal with it.

**Clarke's Ineptitude.**

**The Marshals Unreliable.**

But the Duke of Tarentum himself was at this time almost as hopelessly demoralised as the Duke of Belluno, and between the two of them the Duke of Ragusa had but little faith left in the possibility of resistance. The first onslaught would

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have made them all beat a retreat as early as November, 1813; and if the country had been invaded before the 1st of December, they would have been swept back possibly as far as Paris.

But the invasion did not take place; it was for political reasons that this formidable Allied Army of 230,000 men, which was shortly to be reinforced by a further 100,000, refrained from leaving the right bank of the Rhine. Schwarzenberg, who was naturally cautious and easily frightened, a born temporiser and inclined to be crafty, fell in with these reasons. As a matter of fact, he had good ones of his own for staying where he was; although he had huge forces at his disposal, what he feared even more than Napoleon was France herself, being convinced that the whole country would rise up in defence of her territory, as she had done in 1792. With the land of Danton behind him what could not a Bonaparte accomplish? Thus Schwarzenberg was anxious to have a few weeks' breathing-space. He was thinking out a grand manœuvre—he would give France a surprise blow in the back by violating the neutrality of Switzerland, by which France imagined she was protected. But in order to prepare the Swiss for this violation he, too, required a few weeks.

**Schwarzen-  
berg's  
Caution.**

The Allied Sovereigns were also in favour of calling a halt. As a matter of fact, the Tsar had at first seemed unwilling to do so; but Metternich had his own reasons, which he imparted to his master—he was anxious, by a series of diplomatic manœuvres, to make Napoleon again appear to have refused an honourable peace, and thus alienate French public opinion still further. It might even be possible to create such an atmosphere in Paris that the fall of Napoleon could be brought about almost without striking a blow. Austria was by no means anxious to allow the Tsar to lay down the law on the banks of the Seine, for Metternich at this time was still of opinion that a strong Austrian regency, set up by the French themselves, would give the lead to his own country and deprive Alexander of it. As for the King of Prussia, his chief sentiment was one of alarm at the possibility which Schwarzenberg also feared—if France were to rise up the Allies would be exposed to another Valmy on a grand scale, and if they advanced

**Metternich's  
Plan.**

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recklessly, the fields of Champagne would be "the tomb of the armies of Europe."

As a matter of fact, the first essential was for those "rascals of diplomats," as Blücher called them in his annoyance at this delay, to agree about the course to be followed and, first and foremost, to be quite clear about their own designs.

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The Coalition had originally been definitely formed on the 9th of September, 1813, by the Treaty of Töplitz, but so great was the confusion at the time of its ratification that, in spite of the agreements of Reichenbach, and even of Töplitz, it had remained a somewhat vague organisation. Old subjects of dispute still survived, and though forgotten for a moment, came to life again with victory and the prospect of a general European liquidation over which Austria, for instance, had no intention of allowing the Tsar to preside. With regard to the spoils, the Allies were in agreement on one point only—to wrest as much as possible from the French Empire, which reduced most of the Chancelleries to depriving France even of the conquests won by the Revolution, the famous "natural boundaries." This meant handing over Belgium and the Rhineland to Europe, with the result that there would be territory going begging, and many a tasty morsel. Nothing of all this was discussed at Frankfort, however, any more than it had been at Töplitz. On the contrary, a pretence was made of wishing to leave France with what was now vaguely described as her "legitimate frontiers." This was the aim of the Frankfort farce. And in order to "humour France"—that is to say, French public opinion—it was necessary, as Metternich himself confessed, "to connect the idea of the natural frontiers with the offer to enter into immediate negotiations."

But it was necessary, in the first place, to persuade all the Allies to consent to the offer, however fictitious and misleading, of the natural frontiers. The Tsar refused to hear of it. He was afraid of being taken at his word; for he had already planned to hand over the Rhineland to Prussia, by way of compensation for her

## THE ALLIES ON THE RHINE

portion of Poland, which he had no intention of restoring to her. England was even more opposed to the idea, for, in addition to Antwerp, her pet bugbear, she wished to deprive France of the whole of Belgium and create a strong Kingdom of the Netherlands under the Prince of Orange; this would shut in her ancient foe on the north and once and for all put an end to the nightmare with which she had so long been obsessed. As a matter of fact, Lord Aberdeen, who had been sent to Frankfort, seemed personally disinclined to oppose the opening of negotiations; as for the Tsar, Metternich set his mind at rest by means of an assurance which explains the whole situation. It was necessary to open negotiations, he declared, if only to cast on Napoleon the odium of prolonging the war. Nevertheless, Alexander still hesitated. Could

### **Metternich's Certainty.**

they be sure that Napoleon would refuse? "He will never accept!" replied Metternich. In any case, he would arrange that if by any chance he did accept, the Chancelleries would find some way of wriggling out of the dilemma. The important point was to make a show. "We are trying to bring pressure to bear inside France itself," he wrote to his wife, in whom he could quite safely confide.

To send a plenipotentiary to Napoleon would have meant failing in this object, for a definite firm offer would have to be made, and if it were refused Paris would know nothing about it. It would be far preferable if a Frenchman, with no official mission, who could, therefore, be disowned at will, would undertake to submit an offer which he himself regarded as definite, a Frenchman, moreover, who was in a position to make the authorities in Paris share his illusions. Just such a man was discovered in the person of Saint-Aignan, French Minister at Weimar, who had been brought up in that city. He was summoned to Frankfort and immediately taken in hand by Metternich. A brother-in-law of Caulaincourt, he was above all to be enjoined to associate the latter with him in this delightful enterprise.

On the 9th of November the Austrian Minister received Saint-Aignan. While he was talking to him Nesselrode came in—just by chance, as it were. Whereupon Metternich, as though moved to a sudden outburst of confidence, proceeded to enumerate the desiderata of the Allies—they had decided to allow France to

### **The Allies Interview Saint-Aignan.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

retain her "natural boundaries, consisting of the Rhine, the Alps and the Pyrenees." England, the Austrian Minister audaciously added, was ready "to make the greatest sacrifices for the sake of securing peace on these bases"; at this point, Lord Aberdeen, as had previously been arranged, also casually dropped in. Saint-Aignan had secured pen and paper and was drafting a note which he read aloud; he had taken down word for word everything he had just been told. The three foreigners (Nesselrode, furthermore, declaring that he would stand surety for the absent Hardenberg) apparently approved all he had written. And one and all added that if the negotiations based upon these proposals had a sequel they would be delighted for Caulaincourt to be put in charge of the transaction—at which Saint-Aignan was in the seventh heaven. None of them, of course, signed the note he had drafted. It was a scrap of paper which could thus easily be disavowed. On the same day Castlereagh wrote to Lord Aberdeen from London to tell him that Great Britain would regard with the utmost suspicion any peace which did not confine France strictly within her old boundaries.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ever since his return Napoleon had been busy combating the general demoralisation. He did not mince matters with his Ministers; Savary had to pull himself together to prevent any further undermining of public opinion, while **Napoleon** Clarke had at last to come out of his office and **Raises a** help to organise something more than a paper **Fresh Army.** army. Force of circumstances now made the Duke of Feltre the most important member of the Government. It was necessary to raise and arm 300,000 men. The process proved that, even if France was tired, she was far from contemplating revolt, for the two levies demanded were carried out without any very great difficulty. The brave little conscripts of the 1815 class—mere boys—marched into barracks, not only without a murmur, but actually with a display of most touching enthusiasm. They were to be the brave and undaunted "Marie Louise's" whom Henry Houssaye very rightly extols in his stirring pages.

As a matter of fact, the morale of their parents was not nearly

## THE ALLIES ON THE RHINE

so good. The nation seemed to have no life left in it. The "addresses," full of ardent protestations of loyalty, which the municipal councils had orders to present, deceived nobody. On occasion they concealed something worse than fatigue—treachery. But the masses, though sad at heart, remained faithful. The bourgeoisie, however, grew every day more hostile; one doctor, who assured his colleagues that "Napoleon had fallen into complete disrepute," lived to regret his words. "France failed in her duty," he confessed. "We should have risen up as one man. It was no longer a question of Napoleon, but of our country. We were wrong." This was putting the matter mildly; for during those terrible months the French bourgeoisie were to inscribe perhaps the saddest page of an otherwise frequently glorious history.

The Emperor's "disrepute" encouraged the Royalists and brought in recruits to their side. But almost the only man on whom they placed any reliance was the Prince of Benevento.

Talleyrand, who ever since 1812 had been bombarded with hints and subsequently with more precise requests by Royalist agents of both sexes, gave them a little more encouragement after Leipzig. Napoleon guessed as much; he already regarded Talleyrand as "the greatest enemy of his House." But, intimidated by a scene with the Emperor, the wretch acted with the utmost caution, though he was never tempted to change his mind regarding Napoleon's future. "He's done for!" he declared to one of his fair friends. On the 1st of December, 1813, he received a note, signed by Blacas on behalf of Louis XVIII; it set his mind at rest regarding the treatment the Bourbons would mete out to him and allowed him to contemplate their return with equanimity. The Allies were to find in him the man they required for bringing about the fall of the régime during the height of the national crisis. In vain did Napoleon take drastic and hasty measures to raise an army of 300,000 fresh men; in vain did he turn out guns by the thousand, and, failing all else, hurl his private fortune into the melting-pot for the production of armaments; in vain did he organise his new levies with an almost miraculous energy—the Allies were not perturbed! Through Talleyrand they had friends on the spot ready to overthrow their hated adversary in

**Talleyrand  
and the  
Bourbons.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

the very thick of the fight. Public opinion, already undermined, was secretly but energetically played upon. So morbid had it become that Napoleon, fearing the meeting of the Legislative Body, whom he knew to be contaminated by the new "Liberals," postponed the opening of the session from the 2nd to the 19th of December and continued to confide to the Senate the task of legalising the steps taken. This the Assembly did without demur—in public, that is to say; for senatorial circles were already buzzing with the most peculiar sentiments.

**Meeting of  
the Legis-  
lative Body  
Postponed.**

The Emperor was fully aware of the depressed state of the country and the disaffection of the upper classes. And he was determined not to expose himself to the accusations that were already being brought against him and to play into the enemy's hands by refusing to consider the proposals submitted to him. On the 15th of November, 1813, he accordingly received Saint-Aignan. He questioned him, and with his usual perspicacity, at once perceived the truth. His adversaries were trying to secure his immediate acceptance of conditions which were merely under consideration, and after having got him to pledge himself, while there was nothing in this unsigned scrap of paper to bind them, they would ignore his concessions and demand still heavier sacrifices, reducing him to the alternative of refusing or being confronted by conditions, rather than accept which, he would prefer to abdicate. He had not the slightest intention of clutching at the famous Frankfort Note as though it were his last hope, but wished for a proper Congress to be called at which France should be allowed to have her say with regard to the European situation. Maret, accordingly, replied to the overtures by a Note requesting the summoning at Mannheim of a Congress at which Caulaincourt—since the Allies were so fond of him—should represent France.

**Napoleon  
Receives  
Saint-Aignan.**

It may well be doubted whether Metternich, who had so often been given proof of Napoleon's clear-sightedness, really expected him to fall headlong into the trap that had been set for him. But Saint-Aignan's mission had the result for which he had chiefly hoped. "There was a great deal of deliberately indiscreet talk,"

## THE ALLIES ON THE RHINE

confessed Pasquier, who was extremely well-informed, and very soon the whole of Paris knew the nature of the offers Saint-Aignan had come to submit. Before long the "suggestions" he had received at Frankfort were magnified into "firm offers" and—to quote Pasquier again—"in the Palace, in the city and in the Council a kind of league was formed to push Napoleon into this path to safety."—"The Duke of Vicenza," he added, "was the heart and soul of it, while Monsieur de Talleyrand was not altogether ignorant of the matter." As nobody yet dared to

attack the Emperor himself, Maret, his Minister for Foreign Affairs, to whom Talleyrand had always been hostile, was made the scapegoat. That "fool of a Maret," it was declared, was advising the Emperor badly and prevailing upon him to refuse "this path to safety."

Napoleon gave way to public opinion; he sent Maret back to the Secretariate of State and—yet another concession to public opinion—appointed Caulaincourt Minister for Foreign Affairs. The latter insisted that a straightforward answer should at last be given to Metternich's "proposals" and the "Frankfort bases" accepted.

As I have already observed, this was the result the Allies were fully expecting from Metternich's stratagem. Without troubling about the answer, they were making the preparations already described for the invasion of France. Blücher, called to a halt on the other side of the Rhine, was not to attack the Marshals until the violation of Switzerland enabled Schwarzenberg to outflank them. Active measures were being taken to ensure Switzerland's compliance, and this postponed the manœuvre. But Metternich, as we know, was not sorry that the Paris intrigue should be given time to develop.

It was not until the 25th of November, 1813, that the Austrian Minister replied to Maret's note demanding the summoning of a Congress. Before assenting to the idea of a Congress, the Powers wished to be "certain" that the Emperor would accept "the general bases" the gist of which had been submitted to Monsieur de Saint-Aignan.

This reply found Napoleon definitely prepared to consent to



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

negotiations founded upon the famous "bases." His main object was to secure the meeting of a proper Congress. In a note dated the 1st of December, 1813, Caulaincourt, in the Emperor's name, "consented to the bases which Monsieur de Saint-Aignan had communicated." Metternich's letter had been despatched on the 25th of November; it had reached Paris on the 30th; Caulaincourt replied on the 1st of December in a note which could not possibly reach Frankfort until the 5th. But, with consummate bad faith, Metternich announced on the 4th that, since he had received no reply from France, the Coalition considered they were no longer bound by the promises made to Saint-Aignan. The trick had been played! The Allies forthwith all signed the famous Declaration of Frankfort, which, by means of a further lie, was destined to alienate France from the Emperor. "The Allied Powers," it read, "are not making war on France. The Sovereigns desire France to be great, strong and happy. . . . The Powers confirm the French Empire in the possession of an extent of territory that it never possessed under its Kings. . . ." As will be seen, it was no longer a question of the "natural boundaries"; in fact, immediately after Saint-Aignan's interview with Metternich the Allies were more or less unanimous in protesting against the overtures that had been made. "Madness!" Hardenberg had exclaimed—*Tolles Zeug!*—and Lord Aberdeen had been hauled over the coals by the British Government for having supported such imprudent overtures. But London did not understand that, for Metternich, they did not possess the slightest semblance of reality.

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Napoleon, for his part, had been fully aware of this; he had never believed in the good faith of his adversaries, and had hastened his preparations for defence. If by putting up a stubborn resistance to the crossing of the Rhine, the Marshals could only secure him the few weeks of respite necessary for raising his new army, he hoped to return to the river and launch a strong counter-offensive to ward off the invasion. If necessary, he would

**Napoleon  
Prepares  
for War.**

## THE ALLIES ON THE RHINE

summon the trained troops he still possessed in Italy and the north of Spain.

On the 20th of November he had sent General d'Anthouard to Eugene with precise instructions. If Murat remained loyal he was to join the Viceroy on the Adige, where the latter was to hold his ground against the Austrians. He had sent Joachim that dangerous creature Fouché, whom he was, above all, anxious to hold at arm's length from Paris, and whom he entrusted with the task of keeping the King of Naples in the strait path and prevailing upon him to march with all his forces towards the Alps. We have already described Murat's plans; on the 3rd of January, 1814, he was to put the coping-stone to his treachery by concluding with Neipperg, the Austrian emissary, the infamous treaty of alliance which was to throw Napoleon's brother-in-law into the arms of the Coalition. But the Emperor had taken precautions; if Murat really turned against him and thus made it well-nigh impossible for Eugene to defend Italy, the latter was immediately to lead his army back towards the Alps and reconcile himself to a retreat which would hurl the 50,000 men under his command on to the rear of the Allies.

As for Spain, Napoleon could withdraw Suchet, who with 35,000 men was trying to keep a foothold in the north-eastern provinces, not to mention Soult, who had been driven back beyond the Pyrenees and was still in command of 50,000 men. With the object of setting both these armies free, the Emperor had entered into negotiations as early as November 12th, 1813, with Ferdinand, who had been interned at Valençay; the result was a treaty by which the young King was given back his Crown on condition that he broke with the English and forced them to evacuate the Peninsula. Ferdinand was to be sent back to Spain as soon as the Cortes had ratified the treaty.

But both in Italy and Spain the Emperor's calculations were doomed to be frustrated. At the beginning of December, 1813, however, he had good ground for supposing that before the resumption of hostilities, Eugene's 50,000 men, Suchet's 35,000, and Soult's 50,000 would be able to come to the support of the army which he was feverishly raising. And yet all, or nearly all of them, were to fail him, when Schwarzenberg delivered his

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

surprise blow—the violation of Switzerland—and by outflanking the armies protecting the Rhine, shattered the whole defence in a few days.

SOURCES. *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XXVI). Lecestre, *Lettres inédites*, (II). *Memoirs and Reminiscences* by the Comte de Damas, Marshal Marmont, Marshal Macdonald, Marshal Victor, General de Rochechouart, Thibaudeau, Lieutenant de Civrieux, Vitrolles, Aimée de Coigny, Pasquier, Molé (III), Roederer, Beugnot (II), Montbel, Caulaincourt, Dr. Poumiès de la Siboutie and Madame de Rémusat (III).

WORKS. Those already mentioned by Sorel (VIII), Lefebvre de Behaine, Marion, Masson (VIII and IX) Pingaud (*Bernadotte*), Driault, La Force (*Lebrun*), Lacour-Gayet, and Gignoux (*Louis*). Bertin, *Campagne de 1814*. Henry Houssaye, *1814*. Weil, *Campagne de 1814*. Weil, *Le Prince Eugène et Murat*. Gautherot, *Bourmont*. Rouff, *Chateaubriand*. Marie de Roux, *La Restauration*.

## CHAPTER XLVII

### THE INVASION

The Allied forces. Schwarzenberg violates Swiss neutrality. The Marshals fall back on Lorraine. Napoleon's instructions. The Marshals demoralised. The conspiracy organised in Paris. Opposition in the Palais-Bourbon. Opening of the session. Lafné's report. Sitting of the Legislative Body. The session closed. The Emperor's scene with the deputies. "What is the Throne?" Caulaincourt sent to the Allies, who postpone receiving him. The invasion through Switzerland. Blücher crosses the Rhine on the 1st of January, 1814. The Marshals retreat as far as Champagne. Napoleon's plan. Murat's treachery. Napoleon summons Eugene and the Army of Italy. He joins his lieutenants in Champagne.

**B**Y the middle of December, 1813, a body of 225,000 men was concentrated behind the Rhine, not to mention the 100,000 who constituted a strong reserve force in Germany, while in Italy the 70,000 Austrians under Bellegarde were to drive Eugene back to the foot of the Alps and to cross them, and the 100,000 English, Spaniards and Portuguese under Wellington were to advance over the Pyrenees. The 225,000 Allies on the Rhine confronting the 60,000 left to the French Marshals were alone sufficient to strike terror in the stoutest heart.

The Bohemian army (it still retained the name it had been given in 1813), under the direct command of Schwarzenberg, constituted its main body, its left wing of 120,000 men. The Silesian Army under Blücher consisted of only 60,000 to 65,000 men in the centre of the line. The Northern Army on the right, under Bernadotte, had sent Bülow's corps (Prussians) and Wittgenstein's corps (Russians) to Holland, where they had been reinforced by 8,000 English under Graham.

Between Wesel and Bâle the menace was formidable; yet such was the timidity of the Allies that they abandoned all idea of making a frontal attack and advancing straight on Paris;

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Schwarzenberg, as we know, felt confident of victory only if he succeeded in turning the French line of defence through Switzerland. As soon as the Bohemian Army had entered neutral territory, between Bâle and Schaffhausen, the corps on its right was immediately to fall upon southern Alsace, while the others were to make for Pontarlier and Geneva. When, about the 1st of January, 1814, the French front had thus been turned, the whole of Blücher's army was to cross the Rhine and attack the Marshals, who would already have been thrown into confusion, while the northern corps were to invade Flanders. The bulk of the Bohemian Army was to march, *via* Vesoul and Langres, to Chaumont, where one of its corps was to make for Dijon and the other *via* Geneva for Lyons, while Blücher was to advance on Nancy, which was believed to be undefended, and make for Châlons-sur-Marne. The armies were to converge in the neighbourhood of Paris before the Emperor had had time even to muster his new army. It was hoped that he would be driven to bay in Paris by the 1st of February. "Napoleon is in a sorry plight," wrote Metternich to his wife, on the 20th of December, 1813. "The devil take him!"

On the 21st of December the Bohemian Army crossed the Rhine between Bâle and Schaffhausen. In spite of the protests of the Swiss Government, which, as a matter of fact, were somewhat half-hearted, the little army belonging to the Confederation allowed them to pass. It was a tragic situation. Apparently Napoleon never for a single instant imagined such a thing possible, and had sent strong reinforcements only to the left wing of his army on the Rhine front. But on the 23rd his right was outflanked, and the Austrians were marching on Colmar. Victor, who, as we know, was in command between Hüningen and Landau, was in a distressed state of mind even before this treacherous attack, and as soon as it took place seemed to lose his head altogether. While Napoleon was sending him orders to

### **Violation of Swiss Neutrality.**

### **Napoleon's Orders.**

defend the entry to the Vosges passes in Alsace, his one thought was to get through them himself without striking a blow and seek refuge in the Épinal district or even further back. The Emperor was also despatching precise instructions to all the Marshals, but unfor-

## THE INVASION

unately they arrived too late. His orders were that while Victor defended the line of the Vosges, Marmont, leaving Mayence to the protection of General Morand, was to close in round Strassburg, effect contact with Victor and help him to defend the Vosges against the enemy as long as possible. It was hoped that the latter would be held up there for some time. Meanwhile Ney, with fresh forces, was to make for Metz to support the left wing of the two Marshals, and Mortier was to bring the Guards, whom the Emperor had sent in the direction of Belgium, by forced marches back towards the Langres district. Victor, Marmont and Ney, after having disputed their ground inch by inch with the 60,000 men at their disposal, were to fall back as slowly as possible towards the Langres plateau, where they were again to make a stand. Napoleon calculated that this retreat, interrupted by occasional fighting, would secure him the five or six weeks he still required before he could join his lieutenants with the army which, by that time, would be more or less ready and trained. It was clear that as soon as Schwarzenberg had turned the French positions on the left bank of the Rhine, Blücher would cross the river somewhere near Mayence, whereupon Macdonald, slipping from Belgium into the region of Metz, was to harass his advance, and retreating inch by inch, fall back on Châlons and join the Emperor. Lastly, on Schwarzenberg's rear, a new army was to be formed in the Lyons district and placed under Augereau's command. The Emperor hoped that before long this would be joined by the troops under Suchet and Soult, and possibly later on by Eugene's army.

But the whole of this plan of defence depended on the determination and coolness of the Marshals, and unfortunately at this time they all seemed to have succumbed to a sort of despondency. When soon afterwards the Mayor of Lunéville asked permission to evacuate the wounded, Victor could only reply with a gasp: "It doesn't matter whether they're captured here or somewhere else; we shall all be taken in the end!"—A nice display of panic!

### **The Marshals Demoralised.**

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To make matters worse, the news that the invasion had begun proved the last straw as far as public opinion in Paris was con-

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

cerned. True, the masses remained ardently loyal; as one of the Royalists wrote, Bonaparte "had the vile populace on his side." But, in the capital and the provinces alike, something more than opposition on the part of the governing classes was now to be discerned—a dull rumbling of treachery. The most dangerous centre of hostility was still Talleyrand's house. A group of people were meeting there every day, now fully determined to bring about the downfall of the Emperor; the Duke of Dalberg, Baron Louis, and Abbé de Pradt were its most distinguished leaders. A band of noble ladies used to go there to receive the *mot d'ordre* before circulating it in the salons, which grew more and more bitter and hostile every day. Not content with inspiring this permanent conspiracy, the Prince of Benevento actually sent advice to the Allies. "The Powers cannot take too many precautions," he wrote to a fair Russian friend, "if they wish to avoid having to begin all over again next year."

### **Intrigues in Paris.**

Another centre of ever more embittered opposition was to be found in the lobbies of the Legislative Body. The new "Liberal" party was now all the rage there. It was awaiting the arrival of one of its leading lights, Benjamin Constant, who, though still in exile, was writing that he "hoped to be back for the mort," which his friend, Germaine de Staël, was already sounding from London. This gang were beginning to found the most sanguine hopes on the ringleaders in the Palais Bourbon. The postponement of the session added to the grievances of these "Liberals," who protested violently against this fresh act of "despotism," while the deputies were returning from the provinces in a state of wild excitement or else completely demoralised. "With but few exceptions, they were all ready to denounce the Emperor," one of them confessed. "Most of them, like everybody else in France, regretted that a bullet had not made an end of him, and everybody thought, 'If only he were dead, we should have peace!'"—"Our love for our country," wrote another, "still forced us to make use of an arm we hated," but it was essential for it to be paralysed in future; the time had come for "liberty" to have her revenge!

These sentiments explain the regrettable attitude the Assembly was about to adopt. A good President might perhaps have been

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able to avoid the scandal, but Napoleon was ill-advised in high-handedly appointing the ex-Grand Judge, Regnier, to the chair. The Duke of Massa had but little experience in dealing with an Assembly of which he was not a member, and which was determined to make him feel it.

On the 19th of December, 1813, the Emperor opened the session. On this occasion he summoned the deputies, together

**Opening of  
the Session.**

with a sprinkling of Senators and Councillors of State, to the Tuileries. He made them a speech vibrating with patriotism, a stirring appeal for unity. "France will be in danger unless her people are firm and united!" he declared. In order to answer the calumnies of the Allies, he had decided to submit the documents connected with the latest negotiations to the Assemblies; commissioners appointed by the Senate and the Legislative Body were to examine them and report to their colleagues. When the truth had thus been established one and all would have to do their duty by strengthening their country's defences and rallying round their Sovereign. "You are the natural instruments of the Throne," he added; "it is for you to set an example of energy which will exalt our generation in the eyes of posterity." They seemed little moved by these

**Com-  
missioners  
Appointed.**

brave words, and on being called upon to appoint commissioners, seemed set on making their choice from among those least friendly to the Emperor. The Legislative Body's Commission was entirely composed of new adversaries of the régime, among others Joachim Lainé, deputy for Bordeaux, who was a secret Royalist and before long was to make the fact abundantly plain.

After having examined all the documents dealing with the negotiations, both Senators and deputies were obliged to acknowledge the obvious truth. And the senatorial Commission did so. But the Legislative Body's Commission seemed to be almost disappointed at failing to find anything in the dossier to incriminate their Sovereign. However, Raynouard, one of the commissioners, had no intention of allowing the opportunity of giving the Government a lesson to slip. Lainé, ferreting about in the dossier, maintained that he had found evidence to prove that the Emperor had ruined the chance of peace at Prague; he was to be censured for having delayed in answering the overtures



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

made to him there. It was pointed out to him that if a Congress were to meet, such censure would merely furnish weapons for the enemy. He pretended to give way, but though he may have dropped his strictures, he could not resist going off at a tangent, and making his report an indictment of the "mistakes" and "excesses" of the imperial administration. On the 29th he read this report in the Palais Bourbon. It gave rise to incidents which have only recently come to light and which, in our opinion, amply justify Napoleon's outburst of wrath on this occasion.

### **Lainé's Report.**

From beginning to end, the report, even in its most guarded passages, was deliberately offensive. To prove this it would be necessary to quote it at length, for again and again we find the most perfidious utterances cloaked beneath hypocritical expressions of homage. Even in connection with the negotiations, reference was made to the Emperor's constant "refusal" to entertain overtures of peace—which was in direct contradiction to the Senate's reporter. In any case Lainé congratulated the Coalition on "wishing to keep us within the limits of our own territory and to repress an ambitious activity which for the last twenty years has been so fatal to all the peoples of Europe." Here and there, the Girondist deputy, who seemed to have lost all caution, allowed his sympathy for the fallen Bourbons to become apparent. "The Pyrenees, the Alps and the Rhine," he exclaimed, "enclose a vast territory, several provinces of which have never been under the happy sway of the Bourbons, and yet the royal Crown of France shines refulgent with glory and majesty amid the diadems of the whole world."

The excitement aroused in the Assembly by these words may well be imagined; but such was the spirit that prevailed there, that when the President, the Duke of Massa, interrupted the speaker, objecting that what he had said was unconstitutional, Raynouard sprang to his feet, trembling with indignation. "There is nothing unconstitutional here," he exclaimed, "except your presence!" A storm of abuse immediately burst about the head of the President, who was cowed, and, without any further call to order, allowed the Girondist orator to continue his audacious speech. The latter proceeded to denounce "the vexatious

### **Excitement in the Assembly.**

## THE INVASION

administration, the excessive burden of taxation, the deplorable method adopted for the levying of dues, and the even more cruel excesses committed by the régime in raising recruits for the army," as being responsible for the "unspeakable misery of France,"—all of which was quite alien to the debate. In extremely acrimonious terms he developed his indictment of conscription and wound up with a pathetic appeal to the Emperor, to whom he did not hesitate to hold up the "old French Kings" as a model. Thiers could not have studied Lainé's report when he praised its "moderation" and proceeded to "deplore" the attitude which

### **Vote of the Legislative Body.**

the incident led Napoleon to adopt. The Legislative Body—voted by 223 votes to 51 in favour of its being printed—an unprecedented event. It must not be forgotten that at this very moment

the enemy was invading France on all her frontiers.

The Emperor was immediately informed of the report and the subsequent vote. He did not hesitate a moment.

### **The Session Closed.**

That very evening he declared the session closed.

Lainé should have considered himself lucky not to sleep in Vincennes that night.

On the previous day Napoleon had received the deputation sent by the Senate to present an address, in which the assurances of loyalty and devotion were already not quite convincing. He had made a magnificent reply, above all when he exclaimed, "I call upon Frenchmen to come to the rescue of Frenchmen!" The closing of the session should have spared him the ordeal of answering the scandalous debates in the Palais Bourbon. But, in accordance with formal usage, the Legislative Body, like all the others, had to send a delegation on the 1st of January to

### **Napoleon's Scene with the Deputies.**

wish the Emperor the compliments of the season on behalf of their Assembly. As soon as the Emperor set eyes on the deputies he turned furiously on them and gave vent to a violent

diatribe, which, it must be confessed, was fully justified. It is a celebrated scene. "Surely," he exclaimed, "when we have to drive the enemy from our frontiers, it is not the time to ask me for a change of Constitution! You are not the representatives of the Nation, you are merely the deputies sent by the departments. I called you together to discuss matters. I alone am the represen-

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tative of the people. After all, what is the throne itself? Four pieces of gilt wood covered with velvet? No! The throne is a man, and that man is myself! It is I who can save France, and not you! If I were to listen to you, I would surrender to the enemy more than he is demanding. You shall have peace in three months or I shall perish! When Hüningen is being bombarded and Belfort attacked is not a fit moment to complain of the Constitution of the State and the abuse of power. Go back to your homes! Granted I have made mistakes, you should not reproach me in public." They went out terror-stricken, but "on returning to their homes," that is to say, to their provinces, they bore their rancour with them. Lainé's report was not printed, but hundreds of copies were made of it and circulated far and wide; the session was described as a revival of the great days of the Revolution. Lainé, on being asked his intentions by Savary, is said to have replied: "To see the Emperor at last raise a prostrate nation to its feet again!" The Girondist lawyer had suddenly turned Brutus!

So uncertain was the temper of the provinces that the Emperor decided to send extraordinary commissioners there, chosen from among Senators whom he regarded as loyal. Before their departure he tried to breathe his own spirit into them. "Go and tell the departments that I am going to make peace, that I demand no more French blood for my own purposes—for myself, as they choose to put it—, but that for France and for the integrity of her frontiers I merely beg the means for turning the enemy out of the country." They seemed to be touched.

On the same day the Emperor gave Caulaincourt instructions in conformity with the wishes expressed by the Assemblies.

The Duke of Vicenza was sent to the Allies charged with the mission of formally accepting the "bases" of Frankfort, but only on condition that at the forthcoming Congress France was given a fair hearing regarding the fate of the countries that were to be wrested from her Empire. Caulaincourt set out on the 5th of January, 1814; he begged audience of the Allied Sovereigns and awaited their reply at Lunéville. They allowed him to kick his heels there until the 25th. The fact of the matter was that on the 5th the

## THE INVASION

Allies were already hoping to be in Paris in three weeks' time. As for the extraordinary commissioners who had been sent to the provinces, most of them displayed an entire lack of zeal, or else actually aided and abetted the fomentors of discontent.

Everywhere there was treachery, or at least weakness, unfortunately even at the distant outposts of the Empire, among the military leaders entrusted with the task of defending it.

**Treachery  
Everywhere.**

\* \* \* \* \*

On entering Switzerland on the 2nd of December, the Bohemian Army had, according to plan, divided up into columns which from Bâle and Geneva invaded French territory along a wide front. They met with no resistance on the part of the inhabitants, or very little; while the army, for its part, was falling back without any serious fighting.

**Invasion  
Through  
Switzerland.**

As soon as he found that he had been outflanked in southern Alsace, Victor, as we know, had not awaited the Emperor's orders to abandon Strassburg and retire on Saverne. Marmont, whose right wing was left exposed by this retreat, had immediately deserted Landau and made for the northern Vosges district to support his colleague's left. Thus a whole slice of the left bank of the Rhine had been abandoned, and the Marshals had already even given up the idea of disputing the Vosges passes.

**The Marshals  
Retreat.**

On the 1st of January, 1814, Blücher, on being informed that Schwarzenberg was already marching on Langres from Burgundy, at last hurled his forces against the Rhine. He crossed the river without difficulty, invaded the whole of the Rhineland without firing a shot, and, meeting with no resistance worth mentioning, pushed the Marshals back towards Lorraine. Victor, who had sought refuge in the Épinal district, did not even stand his ground there, but made for Lunéville, where he already seemed to have lost his head completely, failing to put any backbone into his retreat, in which the other Marshals were also perforce involved, since he was constantly exposing their right flank. On the 16th of January Grouchy reported that "a lack of unity was proving

**Blücher  
Crosses the  
Rhine.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

extremely detrimental to His Majesty's interests and was further weakening the already feeble French resources and increasing the rapidity of the invasion."

In the valley of the upper Seine, Mortier, who with the Guard had fallen back from Belgium on to Chaumont and Langres, failed to show any greater determination. Already the evacuation of Langres was being mooted!

Napoleon saw that he would be forced, sooner than he had expected, to hasten to the front and take charge of operations—a fatal step! And in order to encourage the Marshals, he sent word to say that he was coming to Châlons-sur-Marne. It was high time! Marmont had fallen back from Metz to Verdun, Victor from Toul to Commercy, and Mortier from Langres to Chaumont,

**A Disorderly Retreat.** while Ney, also in full retreat, had already reached Bar-le-Duc. The whole of the east had been abandoned without a struggle, and the worst of it was that the forces, exhausted by a straggling and disorderly retreat, were melting away, almost as many men being lost through falling out of the ranks as if they had been fighting. It was unheard-of!

As a matter of fact, the enemy was beginning to meet with a certain amount of resistance—but it was put up by the people themselves. Swiftly subjected to all the horrors of invasion, fury made them pull themselves together. In a few weeks the word "horrors" assumed its full significance, the Allied soldiers indulging in the most terrible atrocities. A tremor of sullen rage spread from Lorraine to Burgundy and the Franche-Comté and reached Champagne even before the enemy had made his appearance there.

**The Peasants Rise Up.** Unfortunately, it was very late in the day; the invasion having spread without the army firing a shot, it only occurred to the peasants to take up arms when they were already bound hand and foot.

Meanwhile the Marshals were continuing their lamentable retreat. On the 24th of January, after a month of this monstrous "campaign," Victor, Ney and Marmont had all arrived at the district of Saint-Didier, which, on false rumours reaching their ears, they also abandoned, all three of them making for the region of Vitry-le-François. It was high time for Napoleon to arrive on the scene.

## THE INVASION

It had been impossible for him to leave Paris before. An army of 100,000 men cannot be improvised in six weeks. And he was preparing a master stroke for which he required reliable troops, having, indeed, worked out a plan of operations on an extremely

### **Napoleon's Plan.**

large scale. After picking up the Marshals, he would place himself at the head of his army and fall upon Schwarzenberg in the Langres district and drive him back towards Burgundy, while he would have him attacked in the rear by the army he was raising near Lyons, under the command of Augereau. This army, the nucleus of which consisted of the troops that had been on their way to Italy but had been stopped by his orders, was to be reinforced by the men Suchet was to bring back from Catalonia. While waiting to fall upon Schwarzenberg's rear, Augereau was to keep his hand in by stopping the Austrians under Bubna who were marching on Lyons from Geneva. The choice of Augereau, however, was

### **Augereau's Ineptitude.**

most unfortunate. He was as devoid of strategic ability as of general intelligence, and, moreover, though he had once been courageous to the point of heroism in a hand-to-hand fight, he was now, of all the demoralised Marshals, perhaps the most unbalanced. As early as the 15th of January he warned Major-General Berthier that Lyons was already as good as "lost," and continued to display an almost total lack of faith and enthusiasm. As a matter of fact, the Emperor regarded him as a stop-gap who was only temporarily to be in command of the little army of 12,000 men which the reinforcements from Spain were to raise to 30,000. For, as we know, Napoleon was expecting that the whole of the Army of Italy, consisting of 50,000 men under Eugene, would have to be recalled from beyond the Alps, and as soon as it arrived he intended to place the Viceroy in command of this important operation.

If, as the Emperor half expected, Murat betrayed him, Eugene would be caught between two fires, and his position in Lombardy would become impossible; in which case it would be better for the Viceroy to lead back his army towards the Alps, and reach Lyons *via* Grenoble. As early as the 20th of November, 1813, the Emperor had prepared the Prince for this contingency. As a matter of fact, Eugene seemed from the very beginning to have

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

turned a deaf ear, and for weeks he deliberately ignored his step-father's orders, being convinced, and remaining  
**Eugene** convinced, that by stopping the Austrians in  
**Summoned.** Italy he would be doing the Emperor better service and certain, moreover, that his Italian contingents, which formed two-thirds of his army, would desert as soon as an attempt was made to get them into France. As a matter of fact, however little lust for power he may have displayed hitherto, he could not help feeling a pang at the thought of abandoning Italy and, with it, his position of Viceroy. Meanwhile Murat's defection could be read by a thousand and one signs. On the 17th of January, 1814, the Emperor again ordered Eugene to bring his army back to France. And the necessity for awaiting the Prince's arrival constituted yet another reason for deciding not to open the campaign too soon.

But everything else was forcing him to move. For while the three Marshals, Victor, Ney and Marmont, had by their hasty retreat suddenly thrown open an extensive area of eastern France to the invader, northern France was being similarly exposed owing to the weakness of the Emperor's other lieutenants. Molitor, who was in command of the troops in Holland, had also fallen back on Flanders without delivering battle,  
**Molitor and** while Macdonald, who had been entrusted with  
**Macdonald** the defence of the Rhine between Coblenz and  
**Fall Back.** Nimegen, finding his right wing exposed owing to the retreat of the other Marshals, had retired on to the Ardennes, and abandoned the Walloon district without striking a blow. The Emperor had thereupon ordered him to dog the right wing of Blücher's army and eventually make for Sainte-Menehould, where he was to effect contact with Imperial Headquarters, which, meanwhile, would have been set up at Châlons-sur-Marne.

Caulaincourt was still awaiting the reply of the Allied Sovereigns at Lunéville. But for the moment the Coalition Ministers had no intention of entering into further negotiations.  
**The Allies** The ease with which the invasion was progressing  
**Refuse to** led them to imagine that their armies had obtained  
**Negotiate.** the upper hand for good. Metternich was waiting

for the finishing touches to be put to the Paris intrigue which, together with the demoralised state of the country, might under-

## THE INVASION

mine the Emperor's position and eventually overthrow him in favour of an Austrian regency. On the 18th of February Castle-reagh had joined the other European Ministers at Freiburg. He announced his intention of ignoring the "bases of Frankfort," which, in any case, he declared went back to the Flood. But, like Metternich, he was not at all anxious to advance too quickly on Paris, hoping that, under pressure of the invasion, a revolution would break out there and overthrow Bonaparte and his régime. The Englishman had the Bourbons in mind. Elated by the conquest of five French provinces, none of the Allies dreamed of treating with the Emperor's plenipotentiary, who continued to kick his heels in dismal solitude at Lunéville.

It was obvious to Napoleon that Europe, as he had foreseen, was wriggling out of her undertaking and would continue to do so, and that once again there would have to be recourse to arms.

Before leaving Paris he had one or two matters to settle. On the 21st of January he gave orders for the Pope to be sent back to Rome. On the 24th he conferred the regency on Marie Louise and, moved to a supreme act of weakness towards his family, associated Joseph with her as Lieutenant-General of the Empire. He considered his brother deserved some compensation for having lost the throne of Spain. Before leaving he had thought of arresting Talleyrand. But, unfortunately, he abandoned the idea. As a matter of fact, he seemed to have fallen more than ever a prey to the fatalism which made him trust to his star to save him even from dangers that could easily be foreseen. Moreover, certain confidences he made show that he was already more or less resigned to the worst. If he were killed, his son would not succeed him. "Believe me," he observed to Reyneval, "whatever we may do, the Napoleonic era is drawing to a close and that of the Bourbons is about to be restored." But he did not appear to be either anxious or sad. He always seemed to have thrown a burden off his back when he returned to his army. For he was merely returning to them. The force he had hoped to lead to their rescue was certainly not ready; he left Paris almost alone. Against the 200,000 men of the Allied armies he could count only on the 50,000 whom he believed to be awaiting him in Champagne.

**Marie Louise  
Made  
Regent.**

**Napoleon  
Leaves for  
Champagne.**



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

"But," he declared, "50,000 men and myself—that makes 150,000." And, wonderful to relate, he was about to provide ample justification for this proud boast. After the month he had just been through he had but little faith left in the loyalty of men; but he felt he could trust his own genius, and thanks to that genius, he also trusted his star.

For SOURCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY, see the end of Chapter L.

## CHAPTER XLVIII

### THE CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE

Napoleon raises the morale of his lieutenants. His plan. Blücher tries to join Schwarzenberg. Napoleon defeats him at Brienne. After the Battle of La Rothière the Emperor falls back on Troyes and then on Nogent. Painful hours at Nogent. Caulaincourt at Châtillon; the humiliating terms communicated to him. Napoleon refuses to consent to them. Blücher retreats from Schwarzenberg. Napoleon advances against Blücher and cuts his army to pieces at Champaubert, Montmirail, and Vauchamps; Blücher in full retreat. Napoleon rounds on Schwarzenberg; the victory of Montereau. The Allies beg for an armistice. The crisis in the Coalition; wavering at Châtillon. Belated uprising of the people in the east. Napoleon prepares a gigantic enveloping movement. The letter to Augereau; Eugene, on being recalled, insists on remaining in Italy. Napoleon makes the mistake of allowing him to do so. Battle of Méry. The Emperor meditates foisting peace negotiations on to the offer of an armistice; the Lusigny conferences. The Allies renew their alliance at Chaumont on the 1st of March, 1814.

**N**APOLÉON joined the Marshals at Châlons. They expected to see him bring 100,000 men with him; when they saw him arriving all alone and still talking of defeating the Allies, they thought for a moment that he was mad. They had brought back from the east mere fragments of corps—35,000 men all told—in an extraordinary state of exhaustion. The Emperor shrugged his shoulders at their objections; victory was not a question of troops, it was a question of manœuvring, and all eyes should be turned to the foe. But as far as he could make out, for the last fortnight the foe had not been manœuvring with the decision, which the insensate retreat of the Marshal made so easy for them. There had been some disagreement between Blücher and Schwarzenberg, the latter advancing slowly and cautiously, while the former was anxious to make one determined rush on Paris. Until that moment they had, as a matter of fact, apparently faithfully adhered to the plan they had adopted; Blücher was to march *via* the Marne and Schwarzenberg *via* the Seine to join forces outside Paris. This plan fitted Napoleon's

**Napoleon  
Joins the  
Marshals.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

purpose admirably. But suddenly Blücher, infuriated by the snail's pace at which the Bohemian Army was marching from

**Blücher's  
Dash for the  
Aube.** Langres to Troyes, made up his mind to go and find the "old slow-coaches" and put some of his own fire into them and from Vitry-le-François had unexpectedly made a dash for the Aube to reach Langres.

The imminent union of the two armies upset the Emperor's calculations, and he made up his mind to prevent it and almost force his adversaries to revert to their original plan. It was a matter of attacking Blücher on the Aube before he had been able to effect contact with Schwarzenberg and after having defeated

**Napoleon's  
Plan.** him, making him fall back on the Marne. He explained his scheme with such heat and fervour that all the Marshals were transformed. For a moment they believed in victory once more; that "devil" of a man had literally set all these exhausted men on their feet again. As for the rank and file, the Emperor's arrival made different men of them, and their one thought was to resume the offensive. Everything had changed because *he* was there. This in itself was a miracle!

Meanwhile, the Allies were imagining themselves to be completely masters of the situation, and felt they would be quite safe in preparing the supreme manœuvre which might perhaps save Schwarzenberg from having to fight. They would at last summon Napoleon's representative, Caulaincourt, to Châtillon and confront him point-blank with the new conditions—the reduction of France to her old boundaries. He would no doubt argue; they would let him talk and thus gain time for the intrigue in Paris, which was to compass the downfall of the Great Man, to become fully matured. Obviously Napoleon would never accept the terms demanded; rather than sign such a treaty he would abdicate; if he did not abdicate there would be a general upheaval of public opinion and he would

**The  
Coalition at  
Langres.** be overthrown. The Coalition Ministers, together with the Sovereigns, had at last betaken themselves to Langres. Metternich agreed with Castlereagh that it would be wise to check the tiresome impatience of the Tsar, whose one thought was to

## THE CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE

hasten to Paris and wreak his revenge for the occupation of Moscow. Caulaincourt was sent a summons for the 3rd of February, whereupon they learnt of Blücher's "wild-goose chase" towards Langres. Schwarzenberg gave vent to his irritation; the "old fellow," in his "childish anxiety to march on Paris," had begun "by rushing like a madman on Brienne!" Those Prussians, wrote the Generalissimo, did not give a thought to their wings or their rear; all they were doing was to plan fine goings-on in the Palais-Royal—just as they had done on the eve of Valmy. They would spoil everything! None of them at the time knew that Napoleon was at Châlons!

Blücher had, indeed, rushed "like a madman" towards the Aube. On reaching Brienne on the 29th, he was taken by surprise and attacked on his flank; Napoleon was hurling the whole of his little army against him. The old Prussian was routed and almost captured; he managed to escape by the skin of his teeth and, with an army three times the size of the one that had just worsted him, he beat a hasty retreat before the victor.

And yet Napoleon was anxious and troubled. He had done Blücher considerable damage, but he had not annihilated him or cut him off from Schwarzenberg. It was possible that before long he would have all the Allied armies on his hands. It would have been madness to await them. On the evening of Brienne he accordingly made arrangements for his forces to fall back on Troyes and sent out orders for all available troops to gather together between Châlons and Troyes. He hoped that Schwarzenberg, whom he had seen temporising for weeks past, would give him time for this. But Blücher's mishap had given rise to consternation at Langres; it was imperative to extricate him from his difficulties and, furthermore, destroy the prestige which, thanks to the old Prussian's temerity the Battle of Brienne, had restored to Napoleon. The Generalissimo marched his corps to meet Blücher, and before forty-eight hours had passed the little

### **Battle of La Rothière.**

French army saw a menacing semi-circle forming round La Rothière. To retreat without accepting battle would have been a confession of weakness on the part of Napoleon. And he decided to fight; but after three hours of desperate struggle he saw that he was really exposing

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

himself to annihilation. Driven out of La Rothière, he had the village recaptured, but only in order to slip away more easily; and on the evening of the 1st of February, leaving Marmont to continue firing so as to cover his retreat, he reverted to his plan of the previous evening and marched his troops back to Troyes, which he reached on the 3rd.

He was disappointed. The Allied forces had now apparently concentrated into a formidable mass which it would be impossible to touch; even with the reinforcements he was expecting he would not be able to place more than 100,000 men in the field against their 300,000. And since they had effected contact all hope of manœuvring was at an end. In spite of all, he maintained a stout heart, hoping that some mistake on the part of the enemy would restore his previous advantage. But on reaching Troyes he saw that everybody's morale had been undermined. The orders he had despatched right and left from Brienne were apparently not being carried out and as for the reinforcements he had demanded from Paris, even the Minister of War was leaving him "completely in the dark." He felt that he was being misunderstood and badly served. Not daring to remain at Troyes, he decided to continue his retreat as far as Nogent, where he was to endure hours of the most terrible anxiety.

**Napoleon  
Retreats to  
Nogent.**

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The troops were becoming more and more demoralised every moment. What! Had the Little Corporal come only to be defeated and drag them back, as the Marshals had been doing, in an endless retreat! Napoleon reached Nogent on the 7th of February, already extremely dejected, only to be met on his arrival with a

**Bad News at  
Nogent.**

budget of bad news, first and foremost that of Murat's treachery, which was definitely confirmed, with full details. Although he had been expecting it, he was cut to the heart. "Murat has turned his guns on the French!" he exclaimed. "It is abominable! He is the Bernadotte of the south!" In addition to the despatches from Italy he also received most serious communications from Paris. Public opinion was veering against him; there was a slump on the Bourse; the Government had gone mad and was driving every-

## THE CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE

body else mad. Joseph was not governing; the Ministers were doing nothing. "They are actually tying their own hands," he exclaimed, "awaiting my sanction to carry out my own orders."—"Has everybody in Paris gone quite mad?" he wrote. "We must have confidence and take heroic measures," and "keep up the spirits of the Empress, who is eating her heart out." But he was overcome. What depressed him more than anything were the lamentations of those about him. They were now, all of them, even the most loyal and devoted, Maret, Berthier and the Marshals, unanimous in begging, adjuring, almost commanding him to "make peace." Peace! What peace? he cried.

Determined to have a clean conscience on the subject, he turned once more to Caulaincourt, who had hastened to Châtillon as soon as he had received the summons on the 23rd of January, and had been awaiting the Allied plenipotentiaries ever since. The latter eventually made their appearance on the 4th of February, determined to force the Emperor either to refuse, which would rouse the wrath of the peace party, or to accept such humiliating terms that refusal or acceptance would be alike fatal. Even if he accepted, they had no intention of abiding by the agreement. "What if he consents to everything," the Russian Razumovskii enquired of the others, "ought we to sign?" Thus had they prepared the quicksands in which their illustrious adversary was to founder.

Moreover, Caulaincourt's humiliating position encouraged the most outrageous pretensions. And yet, a prey to the illusions he had continued to cherish ever since his two years of intercourse with the rest of Europe, the unfortunate Caulaincourt was still convinced that the proposals made "in all good faith" at Frankfurt in November, 1813, could still serve as the basis of negotiation in February, 1814. He was convinced that there had merely been a deplorable misunderstanding which he, "the good European," would clear away; he would secure the natural frontiers, if only the Emperor would give him a free hand. And this he begged him to do. He would not have taken the trouble had he been aware of the declaration which Castlereagh, the English plenipotentiary, made in the presence of his three

**Caulaincourt  
at Châtillon.**

**Caulaincourt  
Demands a  
Free Hand.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

colleagues as early as the 5th. Even if Napoleon consented to their terms, England, he announced, would put her signature to nothing until the Allies had reached a decision regarding the future organisation of Europe. This declaration seemed so typical of the whole situation that Stadion, the Austrian envoy, wrote to Metternich on the same day saying that it had simply turned all they were doing into a stupid farce. But had Metternich ever expected anything else? Caulaincourt, however, did not know this. And he continued to clamour for a blank cheque from the Emperor, which Napoleon granted from Troyes on the 5th of February, telling him that as soon as the Allies had communicated their terms, he had full power to accept them or to refer them to

### **The Allies' Terms.**

him. On the 7th the Allies at last put their cards on the table; France was to be confined within the frontiers of 1791 and forbidden to have any share in the reorganisation of Europe. Thus the Empire was to suffer drastic mutilation, while the Emperor was to be made an outcast and excluded from the concert of Europe. Caulaincourt was thunderstruck, but instead of expressing indignation he merely gave way to despair; once more he wrote a frantic letter to his master, having—at last!—discovered that he was dealing with people “who were anything but sincere.” On the 9th of February the conferences were stopped. “What is the good of going on with them?” observed Razumovskii. “*He* is going to be kicked out.”

Napoleon, on whom for some hours bad news had literally been pouring, received Caulaincourt's despatch during the night of the 7th to the 8th—the frontiers of 1791 and the exclusion of France from Europe! This communication filled his cup of bitterness full to overflowing. He crumpled up the paper, and thrusting it into his pocket without saying a word, retired to his room. But Maret and Berthier had understood. They followed him and assured him that, now everything was foundering, he must consent to supreme sacrifices. But he only gave vent to a torrent of fury

### **Napoleon's Despair.**

and indignation. “What!—leave France smaller than I found her? Never!” And, quite beside himself, he talked for a long time, though more in sorrow than in anger. Seeing, however, that, though sad and dejected, they meant to insist, he suddenly exclaimed, “Answer

## THE CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE

what you will! As for me, I shall never sign!" They left the room to draft a letter of acceptance which they hoped to induce him to sign in the morning. When he was alone he tried to sleep, got up, went to bed again, and, unable to rest, paced up and down in a state of feverish tension. It was during the course of this terrible night that, knowing the worst was now possible, including his own death, he wrote to Joseph telling him that if by any chance the enemy reached Paris and seemed likely to take the city, he was to evacuate the Queen Regent, the King of Rome and the whole Government to the Loire, a letter which, as we shall see, was one day to prove his undoing. Having despatched it, he awaited the missive the others were preparing in which he would either have to sign his own "dishonour" or else once more hurl himself into the abyss.

An aide-de-camp entered and handed him a despatch. Suddenly his face lit up. "My maps!" he exclaimed, in a voice hoarse with emotion. Seizing hold of them, he spread them out on the floor, lay down on them, and arranged his pins.

**Napoleon  
Receives  
Good News.**

He had just heard that the hope he had at first entertained, but had been obliged to abandon, had been fulfilled—Blücher and Schwarzenberg had separated! The latter was continuing his march on Troyes and the old Prussian had returned to the Marne. In a flash he saw that the victory, of which a moment before he had for the first time despaired, had once again become possible, probable, certain! And when Maret entered, bearing the despatch consenting to capitulation which had been drawn up for Caulaincourt, the Emperor, raising his head, gazed at him almost with surprise. "Oh yes, it's you!" he exclaimed. "But I have something very different to attend to now. I am just defeating Blücher in my mind's eye. I shall defeat him to-morrow, and the day after to-morrow; the whole situation is going to changel!" The boast, which seemed to fall from the lips of a madman, was destined to be realised!

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So they had made the mistake for which he had ceased to hope! Blücher, exasperated by Schwarzenberg's delays, had insisted on regaining his independence, while the Austrian was just as eager



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

to be rid of the "poor old fellow," the inconvenient "madman."

**Blücher  
Separates from  
Schwarzen-  
berg.**

And they had come to an agreement; Blücher should never have left the Marne; he was to go back to Châlons to give a hand to the Allied forces that were coming from the east under York, Kleist and Langeron, and who, if they failed to find him at Châlons, ran the risk of being left high and dry. As soon as he had them under his wing he would make a fine army for himself; without breathing a word to anybody he was meditating nothing less than rushing, without orders, on Paris, access to which was barred only by Macdonald's much reduced corps, which the Emperor had brought to a halt to the north of Château-Thierry. He would crush him, and when it became known that he was at Meaux, that timid and vacillating Schwarzenberg would have to make up his mind to leave Troyes and attack the Emperor and his remnants of armies; he would have to sweep him away and also appear outside Paris. Schwarzenberg was far from contemplating any such step at the moment; it was necessary, he declared, for him to keep in touch with Bubna's corps, which was operating in Burgundy, and which, if Augereau were to abandon his inactivity, might be attacked.

This left Napoleon time to realise the plan to which he had once more reverted, and without losing a moment he made preparations for the march which would enable him to fall, like a bolt from the blue, on Blücher's flank, cut him off, hack him to

**Napoleon's  
Plans.**

pieces and annihilate him, or at least weaken him sufficiently to enable him to turn round on Schwarzenberg, drive him back in his turn, force him to retreat to his base, and clear French soil of the enemy, and if Augereau at last did his duty and Eugene came to the rescue in time, even make France the "tomb of the Allies." The terrible crisis through which he had just passed was over, the dread spectres of the night of the 7th to the 8th had vanished. Once more proud and alert, he issued his orders right and left, clear and definite.

Meanwhile Blücher imagined that his dream was coming true;

**Blücher's  
Advance.**

he was marching on Paris, madly, recklessly. Before his advance guards, Macdonald was falling back on Meaux. Already York, in the van, had reached La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, near Paris; he was advancing with

## THE CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE

giant strides and in order to keep in touch with him, the corps in the rear were becoming dangerously extended. Sacken, Olsufjew, Kleist and Langeron were rushing from Châlons in the direction of Meaux without protecting their flank. On the 9th, Macdonald having definitely fallen back on Meaux, they all precipitated themselves upon him. Their shouts of *Nach Paris!* already had the ring of triumph. Sacken had advanced beyond Montmirail, Olsufjew had almost reached Champaubert; in the rear Blücher was at Etoges with Kleist and Langeron—60,000 men; but their formation was very loose and they were badly exposed.

On the 10th of February Napoleon had already reached the Petit Morin, on the enemy's flank, without Blücher having the slightest suspicion of his presence. Suddenly the thunderbolt fell. The first blow came crashing down, right on Olsufjew's flank on the plateau of Champaubert. The Russian corps was cut in two and having lost three-quarters of its strength, left 4,500 men on the field or in Napoleon's hands, together with 20 guns, while the remnants were driven westwards towards Sacken, who, cut off from Blücher in the east, lost his head and tried to make for Meaux and effect contact with York. It was imperative for Napoleon to catch Sacken.

He accordingly fell back on Montmirail, and here, on the 11th, the second blow came crashing down, this time on Sacken's head. The latter, on being attacked, wheeled round and endeavoured to stand his ground, but was hurled back, almost done for. With 6,000 men killed or taken prisoner, only a third of his unfortunate corps succeeded in joining York. But York himself was menaced with being caught between Napoleon and Macdonald—if only the Marshal understood his duty! But he did not; if he had acted not a single man of York's corps, hampered by the remnants of Sacken's forces, would have escaped. But York, profiting by Macdonald's inactivity, succeeded in crossing the Marne and fled towards the Aisne.

Napoleon had no intention of following him. Marmont, left in Montmirail, was holding Blücher in check, and the Emperor, turning east again, now determined to attack the old fellow himself. On the 14th a terrific fight took place at Vauchamps; one of Blücher's divi-

**Napoleon  
Defeats  
Olsufjew.**

**Battle of  
Vauchamps.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

sions having been surrounded and three-quarters of it captured, the rest of the Silesian Army, menaced with envelopment, beat a hasty and disorderly retreat towards Châlons. The French cavalry, debouching from Fromentières and charging headlong right into the centre of the 20,000 Prussians, turned the retreat into a rout. Time and again Blücher was within an ace of being captured. In the flight he lost another 6,000 men, and returned to Châlons with his army in bits, and was already prepared, if Napoleon pressed him, to retreat, if need be, to Nancy. But could the Emperor do so?

In four days Napoleon had realised the first part of his plan and he now felt confident of being able to make an end of Blücher. But, at that very moment, he received frantic despatches from the two Marshals left to face Schwarzenberg; they were in full retreat and calling to him for help. He left Marmont near Montmirail to keep watch on "the remnants" of Blücher's army and returned towards the Seine.

\* \* \* \* \*

Oudinot and Victor, ever since the Emperor had disappeared in a northerly direction, had been living in a state of mortal terror. They were falling back without rhyme or reason, almost dragging the enemy in their wake. After retreating from point to point they had taken refuge behind the Yères, near Fontainebleau, and were clamouring for help. There was no alternative but to go to their rescue. And Napoleon, extremely irritated by their pusillanimity, had perforce to make up his mind to go.

**Oudinot  
and Victor  
Call for Help.**

The result was another lightning stroke. By the 17th the Emperor reached Guignes and, immediately on his arrival having

**Napoleon  
Goes to  
Them.**

taken in hand the troops under the two Marshals, as well as the forces he had brought back with him, marched on Mormant, in the direction of Nangis, pushed on towards Montereau, where he fell in with Wittgenstein's corps, which he swept before him and forced to beat a retreat across the plain under a hail of shot and shell which laid 4,000 Russians low. The French corps immediately made for Nogent, Bray and Montereau to seize the bridges across the Seine. As Victor, who had been told to make

## THE CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE

a rush for Montereau, was delaying, Napoleon hurried after him, followed on his heels and caught him up. He reached the plateau of Surville, overlooking Montereau, and was on the point of making himself master of it.

But at this moment he was surprised to learn that an envoy, bearing a flag of truce, had presented himself in Schwarzenberg's name and was begging for an armistice. He sent him away, declaring the appeal was merely a feint to rob him of the victory that was now within his grasp.

It was a genuine offer, however. For the last week the Coalition had been passing through a grave crisis which might prove fatal.

A peasant rising, provoked by the atrocities committed by the invaders, was being organised under their very noses, from the Rhine to the Marne, and from the Jura to the Ardennes; above all, the mountain folk in the Vosges, the Donon and the uplands of Alsace were rushing to arms and threatening the enemy's

**The  
Peasants  
Rise.**

communications. The Allied Generals, who found their troops being attacked at every turn, were discussing this campaign of the "blue blouses" with some concern. And the Allied leaders were filled with considerable perturbation. Where were they going? Had they not relied too much on the country's "alienation"? After all, Napoleon seemed still to have a firm hold over it. Nowhere among the peasantry, as the Tsar was shortly afterwards obliged to confess, had the Allies found any desire for the Emperor's overthrow. Already some of the Allied Ministers were wondering whether they ought to insist on driving out Napoleon. And Castlereagh, once the most uncompromising of them all, declared that unless a national upheaval rendered his power to sign a contract dubious, they would perforce have to resign themselves not to overthrow the individual placed at the head of the French Government. The "national upheaval" was taking place, but it was directed against them. At meetings held on the 12th

**The Châtillon  
Conferences  
Resumed.**

and 13th of February the most acrimonious discussions took place. Metternich obtained the Tsar's consent for the Châtillon conferences to be resumed; nothing was to be conceded in regard to the natural boundaries, but if Caulaincourt accepted the old

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

frontiers, no further effort was to be made to force Napoleon to abdicate. Meanwhile, "the individual placed at the head of the French Government," as the Englishman thought fit to refer to him, was proving himself eminently capable of winning fresh victories. For, on the 17th of February, the news of the cruel defeats suffered by Blücher came to hand, and forced them to stop and think and devise fresh plans. It was for this reason that Schwarzenberg was begging for an armistice.

But meanwhile Napoleon had rounded on him. Launching an attack on the Surville plateau, he succeeded, after a terrific fight, in capturing it and hurling the whole of the **Battle of Montereau.** Württemberg corps into Montereau—"utterly routed," its own General confessed—where he put the finishing touches to its discomfiture, and gaining a foothold on the bridge before it could be destroyed, once more found himself master of the situation. Already he was preparing operations on a grand scale which, far from the Seine, were to turn the enemy's defeat into a colossal rout.

In fact, at this moment, he was turning his eyes to all points of the compass in turn, first and foremost to Belgium; he had just provided General Maison, who had been told to hold his ground there, with a bulwark that nothing could shake, having confided the defence of Antwerp **Carnot in Antwerp.** to no less staunch and reliable a personage than Carnot, who, with admirable patriotism, had placed himself, uncompromising Republican though he was, entirely at the Emperor's disposal, declaring that Napoleon was now no more than the incarnation of France in danger. With such a man, Antwerp would not give way. But it was imperative for Maison, thus supported, to conduct a vigorous campaign to keep Bülow's and Wintzingerode's corps, which had been detached from Bernadotte's army, occupied in the north and prevent them from joining Blücher and providing him with fresh forces. The General operating in Belgium could by his own activities menace the enemy's rear, wrote the Emperor, "and make him tremble in his shoes."

From Belgium, his extreme left wing, he turned his gaze to his extreme right, the Lyons army which, in his mind's eye, he did not

## THE CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE

differentiate from the Army of Italy. Augereau was causing him anxiety and already almost driving him to desperation. The Marshal was making excuse after excuse for remaining inactive, and each pretext revealed a pusillanimity which exasperated the

**Napoleon's Letter to Augereau.** Master. The letter—the famous letter—the Emperor wrote him on the eve of Montereau reveals the passionate desire he felt to restore to his old self the man whom in the past he had known

as so valiant a soldier, but who was now weak and exhausted. I should like to quote the letter in full. "We cannot go on as we have done of late," he wrote. "We must put on our top-boots again and show the determination of '93. When the French see your plume in the van and find you are the first to expose yourself to the enemy's fire, you will be able to do as you please with them."

Did he really expect this fiery epistle to restore Augereau's courage and force him to move? Perhaps! For, after sending it, he seems temporarily to have abandoned the idea of superseding him by Prince Eugene in command of the projected operations. Only a short while back he had sent his step-son urgent summons to return to the valley of the Rhône with his Army of Italy, and the idea had not ceased to haunt him for the last two months. He had the operation so much at heart that, since Eugene did not seem to favour it, he had, a few days previously, persuaded Josephine herself to take the unprecedented step of sending him a heart-rending despatch begging him to come back. But Eugene had no sympathy whatever with Napoleon's idea.

**Eugene Refuses to Leave Italy.** He was intoxicated by the victory he had just won over the Austrians at Roverbella, on the Mincio, and declared that he could still "keep Italy for the Emperor." The Neapolitans, he said, were not taking any hostile steps. Perhaps it might be possible to win them back again. And he sent his cousin, General Tascher de la Pagerie, to the Emperor at Montereau. Three days previously Napoleon would have repeated his orders to Eugene's emissary and insisted upon the Viceroy returning to the Alps. But at Montereau his step-son's arguments found him in a state of super-abundant optimism which made him inclined to listen to them. Having so far defeated the Allies that it was they who were begging for an

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

armistice, he intended to drive them back, and crush them, after which he would reopen negotiations for peace under very different conditions. And then how glad would he not be that in order to bring pressure to bear on Austria he still retained possession of the country the evacuation of which he had ordered but a short while back! And thus the fatal decision was made,—he refrained from summoning Eugene and his 50,000 men to Lyons.

\* \* \* \* \*

As a matter of fact, at this juncture he fondly imagined he had definitely saved the situation. "I can dictate my own terms," he wrote to Joseph. And he ordered Caulaincourt, who had remained at Châtillon, not to make any concessions. **Napoleon's Optimism.** "I am ready to suspend hostilities and allow the enemy to return quietly home if they will sign preliminaries based on the Frankfort proposals," he informed his representative on the 17th. He really wished the negotiations at Châtillon to drag on and to attach to the suggestion of an armistice further negotiations which he would direct himself. Meanwhile he continued his victorious march from Montereau towards Méry-sur-Seine, while Schwarzenberg beat a headlong retreat.

But at Méry, he unexpectedly found himself confronted by forces whose appearance seemed for a moment most mysterious.

**Battle of Méry.** He could hardly believe his eyes! It was Blücher! The old Marshal had set another army on foot at Châlons; York, after making a wide detour *via* the Aisne, had effected contact with him, and the subsequent arrival of the Russian corps under Saint-Priest, who had come up from the Rhine, had once more put him in command of 48,000 men. Hearing of Schwarzenberg's retreat, he had decided to go to him for the second time and force him to advance. But on reaching Méry he found that Schwarzenberg had already fled and that he had run into Napoleon instead. It did not take him long to discover this, for he was immediately attacked, defeated and driven back.

The French were now marching on Troyes, while Schwarzenberg had decided to fall back at least as far as Langres. On the 22nd of February he laid his plans before a council of war and they were sanctioned. On the 24th the Emperor entered Troyes, where

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he was welcomed with a wild enthusiasm very different from the icy reception he had been accorded on the 3rd. Years seemed to have passed between the 3rd and the 24th; everything appeared to have changed—on both sides. The Allies were becoming more and more disorganised. Blücher, who had once again succeeded in getting into touch with Schwarzenberg, was overwhelming the

**Discord  
Among the  
Allies.**

latter with acrimonious letters on the subject of his retreat. On the 23rd of February, another council of war was held at Bar-sur-Aube. The Tsar, fortified by Blücher's indignation, gave vent to his fury at the humiliation to which he was being subjected. Was not Schwarzenberg actually suggesting that they should not make a stand even at Langres? The Generalissimo had got wind of the manœuvre which Augereau was to help to carry out in his rear and declared that in his opinion it would be wiser to abandon all thought of remaining in France and to reorganise their forces on the Rhine. Alexander, in exasperation, announced his intention of leaving the Allied Staff and joining Blücher in an advance on Paris. In the end it was decided that the retreat should be continued as far as Langres, where a stand was to be made in order to prepare for a fresh advance. Blücher was sent back to the Marne; he was to effect contact with the corps under Bülow and Wintzingerode, who were to descend, *via* the Ardennes, to the Aisne and place themselves under his command.

Meanwhile Napoleon, as I have already observed, was contemplating opening fresh negotiations under very different conditions. Eventually, in reply to the request for an armistice received on the previous day at Montereau, he sent General

**Flahaut Sent  
to Lusigny.**

de Flahaut to Lusigny with instructions to inform the Allies that before consenting to an armistice, the Emperor insisted on an understanding that the Frankfort bases would be accepted as a preliminary to any discussion of peace. The Allies were not yet reduced to this; but the demand showed them the extent to which the situation had changed to their disadvantage during the last fortnight.

Moreover, the lack of unity between them, which was every day becoming more pronounced, might quite easily make matters quite impossible for them. The Tsar saw that if this were allowed to continue the worst might happen. And on reaching Chaumont



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

he suggested that there should be a frank discussion, after which the alliance was to be renewed by a solemn act of ratification. They all consented to this, and on the 1st of March the Treaty of

**Treaty of Chaumont.** Chaumont was signed renewing the alliance of Töplitz for a period of twenty years. "The Congress of Châtillon," which seemed to be on its last

legs, was to be reopened, and the plenipotentiaries instructed to repeat the terms that had already been formulated; Napoleon's representative was to be given a time-limit in which to submit a counter-project, but the latter would receive consideration only on condition that it was founded not on the Frankfort bases, of which the Allies refused to hear any further mention, but on the Châtillon bases.

This tightening of the bonds of the alliance was an extremely serious event, and had the Emperor known of it he would certainly have been perturbed; but he would not have been desperate;

**Napoleon's Confidence.** for, after the miracles he had performed during the last fortnight, he no longer felt any qualms about the future. If his army continued to show

itself the force it had just proved itself to be, if his lieutenants did not again disappoint him, and lastly, if Paris remained resolutely loyal to him, since he himself was still at the helm, he felt he could hope, by a master stroke, to crush the coalition he had just defeated, however strong the bonds that bound it.

For SOURCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY, see the end of Chapter L.

## CHAPTER XLIX

### NAPOLEON ON THE AISNE

In Paris, public confidence is restored though the Government flounders hopelessly. Talleyrand's intrigues; he supports the Bourbons. Blücher determines to march on Paris. Napoleon hurls himself between the Marne and the Aisne and hopes to annihilate Blücher there; he brings him to bay on the Aisne; the capitulation of Soissons saves Blücher. The Emperor determines to cut him off from Laon. Battle of Craonne; the Chemin des Dames. Abortive attack on Laon. Napoleon contemplates turning eastwards. Appeals from Macdonald and Oudinot bring him back to the Seine. The Congress of Châtillon resumed. Schwarzenberg contemplates returning to the Rhine. Arrival of Vitrolles at Allied Headquarters; the "crutches" note. Wellington invades the south-west; the Royalists summon him to Bordeaux. Augereau's lamentable behaviour; he falls back on Lyons. The north-east is invaded, but rises up against the enemy. Napoleon prepares for a gigantic movement on the rear of the Allies. The victory of Rheims. The Bordeaux "revolution"; the Duc d'Angoulême installs himself there behind the English lines. Paris demoralised; the strange behaviour of the Regency Council. Napoleon hesitates. He marches against Schwarzenberg's flank; two days' fighting at Arcis-sur-Aube. Under pressure of superior numbers, Napoleon slips away and hurriedly makes for Saint-Dizier to carry out his plan. All ardour damped by Caulaincourt. The Emperor awaits the Allies, whom he believes to be retreating.

**T**HE Allies, genuinely discomfited, found it impossible to have done with Napoleon unless their accomplices in Paris showed greater energy. They expected them to engineer a revolution or a *coup d'état*.

But Paris was apparently very far from contemplating a revolution. The people there had greeted Blücher's defeats with transports of joy and had fallen on each other's necks in the streets. "Never has there been such great or such widespread enthusiasm," wrote the Prefect of Police. It was not from the people, however, "the vile populace," that Metternich was expecting the solution to come; it was from the conspiracy which was being organised in certain circles and which the Government's inertia was fostering.

The latter was still floundering about in a perpetual state of

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panic, and the Emperor was exasperated beyond endurance by the letters he received from Joseph and the Ministers. "I am not being obeyed," he wrote. "You all know better than I do, and are always opposing me with your *but*s and your *ifs* and your *fors*. The whole of France would have been under arms by now but for the pusillanimity of the Ministers." Savary was as blind as a bat; for Paris was seething with intrigues which Napoleon, from his headquarters, was obliged to bring to the notice of the Ministry of Police. "Never have I been so badly served," he concluded. The people he particularly referred to were Talleyrand and his gang who were conspiring right and left. "Beware of that man," he had written to Joseph some time before. "He is undoubtedly the greatest enemy of our house now that fortune has temporarily forsaken it."

**The  
Government  
Flounders.**

**Talleyrand's  
Intrigues.**

The greatest enemy—yes, and the most dangerous! For, as a high dignitary of the imperial régime, and *ex officio* missing not a single one of the Regency Councils, he still also kept secretly in touch with his old Foreign Office chiefs, Hauterive and La Besnardière, who informed him of everything. He was also in communication with Caulaincourt who confessed that he told him, "in cipher," of all that was going on at Châtillon. Moreover, he had his own informants in the Senate—Beurnonville and Sémonville, and through others got into touch with those whom he ironically dubbed "the patriarchs of the Revolution," Lanjuinais, Garat, Grégoire and Sieyès. Through his friend Jaucourt, one of Joseph's intimate advisers, he knew all about the Lieutenant-General's state of indecision and what he wrote to the Emperor and the Emperor wrote to him. He also had friends everywhere—Molé, who was now in office and sat on all the councils; Chabrol, Prefect of the Seine; Pasquier, Prefect of Police, and a score of others, who used to enter by the front door of his house in the Rue Saint-Florentin and avoided running into those who slipped in by the side-door; the Royalist agents, more particularly Vitrolles, until then an obscure individual, who was said to be an important Royalist agent.

**Vitrolles'  
Activities.**

As a matter of fact, the Prince of Benevento was now whole-

## NAPOLEON ON THE AISNE

heartedly in favour of the Bourbons. At the beginning of February, reassured by Blacas' communication, he at last told Madame de Coigny, who had been living in hope for the last year, "I am all for the King. But. . . ." Without allowing him to formulate his objections, she had flung her arms round his neck. He was now setting all his machinery in motion, still with the utmost secrecy, without "burning his fingers," as Dalberg put it. Vitrolles, summoned by Dalberg, presented himself before the Allies and exhorted them to take heart and march on Paris, where "they were being awaited with open arms," as Dalberg himself had already written to Metternich at the end of 1813.

\* \* \* \* \*

Blücher did not require any promise of being "awaited with open arms" before marching on Paris. Hardly had he separated from Schwarzenberg for the second time than, furious at seeing his colleague once more retreating, he again conceived the mad plan of rushing to the capital by himself and taking it with a flourish of trumpets. And with his little army he made a dash for it, just as he had done three weeks previously. Napoleon had left only the weak corps under Marmont and Mortier to bar the way to Paris. Blücher hurled himself upon them and drove them back to the Ourcq; true, they tried to prevent him from crossing at Lizy, and Marmont even advanced to May to meet the Prussian troops.

**Blücher  
Makes a Dash  
for Paris.**

Napoleon, on hearing of Blücher's manœuvre, was overjoyed. Leaving 40,000 men with Macdonald and Oudinot to hold the Bohemian Army in case it resumed the offensive, he left Troyes with the utmost secrecy, with 35,000 men and hastened direct to the Marne. On the 2nd of March he was at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre. If Blücher had hesitated for twenty-four hours he would have been caught between the Marshals on the Ourcq and the Emperor, who was marching from the Marne to the Aisne. But he did not dream of hesitating, and retired by forced marches towards the Aisne to effect contact with Bülow and Wintzingerode. Napoleon, however, was convinced that the Aisne, which was held by the French at Soissons, would present Blücher with an insuperable obstacle. He, too, was

**Napoleon's  
Manœuvre.**

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hastening towards the river, while, at his command, the Marshals were also hurrying after "the poor old fellow," as Schwarzenberg called him. Blücher saw the seriousness of the position, and sent appeal after appeal to Bülow and Wintzingerode to cross the Aisne and come to his support. His retreat, like every retreat dictated by panic, was being carried out in the most trying circumstances. Schack, York's Chief of Staff, wrote that the Prussians were marching, "obsessed by the fear of being caught by Napoleon and the Marshals and driven to bay at Soissons, which was occupied by the French."—"They were in a state of terrible distress," added another Prussian. But at Buzancy Blücher found a despatch from Wintzingerode informing him that an audacious ruse had delivered Soissons into his hands; the road was clear!

**Capitulation of Soissons.**

The Governor, a certain General Moreau, had sufficient forces at his disposal to defend the place for the two days required, but had allowed himself to be fooled by a young Russian Colonel named Lövenstern (the latter's account is most damaging to Moreau). General von Colomb, a Prussian, declared it was this that enabled the Prussian army to "get out of the toils." For Blücher, hurling his whole army on to Soissons, managed to get it across the river which, only twenty-four hours before, had seemed like being his tomb.

**Blücher Saved.**

The news quickly reached the Marshals, who warned Napoleon. It did not take him five minutes to write to Clarke a pulverising letter, in which can be read the thunder of his legitimate wrath against the "wretch" who had surrendered the place. And then he fell on his maps again and tried to think out how he could get the better of Blücher on the other side of the river.

The Prussians were marching through Soissons, though slowly. By crossing the Aisne further east, it would be possible quickly to get to the rear of the range of hills, swiftly skirt them, and debouch on the Soissons-Laon road before Blücher—in fact, to envelop him while he was still in the hills. The plan was no sooner conceived than it was put into execution. The army hurriedly marched to Berry-au-Bac, took the bridge there by surprise, crossed the Aisne and debouched to the east of the Craonne plateau.

**Napoleon Crosses the Aisne.**

## NAPOLEON ON THE AISNE

Blücher could hardly believe his eyes when he saw the French on his flank on the right bank of the river and felt it imperative to frustrate Napoleon's manœuvre. It seemed hopeless to try to reach Laon before the French, for, as recent experience has shown us, this little range is extremely treacherous ground, intersected by the marshy bed of the Ailette and far from favourable for rapid marching. He decided to turn east and swoop down on the flank of the French army as it was marching on Laon. Wheeling his troops round, he rushed his first corps along the Chemin des Dames in the direction of Craonne, with orders to fall on the French. Napoleon, who was far too wary to neglect protecting his line on the march, had sent some regiments towards Craonne

### **Battle of Craonne.**

to guard his flank. They ran up against the whole of Blücher's army and, on the 7th of March, a fight took place which developed into a regular battle and forced the Emperor to modify his plan. After an extremely hard day, he defeated Blücher and drove him back on to the Chemin des Dames with heavy losses. But he was forced to follow him and debouch on the Laon plain on his heels instead of in front of him. The Prussians, merely badly buffeted, found refuge in Laon on the evening of the 8th.

Napoleon should have resigned himself; the mountain fastness of Laon is not one that can be taken by a *coup de main*; but the Emperor had had victory so nearly within his grasp that he could not bear to let it slip. And he tried to force it by recklessly seeking Blücher out in that eagle's eyrie. Not only did he fail, but Marmont, just as he was reaching Laon, allowed himself to be surprised at Athies by a formidable "hourra" of Cossacks. "He

### **Failure at Laon.**

behaved like a lieutenant," wrote Napoleon, failed to stay his ground, let panic seize his troops and lost at least half of them. Napoleon, after two days of futile assaults, resigned himself to returning to Soissons, which he had taken care to reoccupy. Thus the campaign of the Aisne, which had been within an ace of saving the whole situation, ended with a serious reverse.

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Napoleon had intended this campaign to be merely a stepping-stone for a far more important operation; after having crushed

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Blücher, he hoped to have linked up from Laon with the 40,000 men dispersed in the various strongholds along the Meuse, and even though he had fallen back on Soissons he was bitterly disappointed at having to abandon his manœuvre. Perhaps, *via*

**Napoleon's Plan.** Rheims he might be able to resume it. With these strong reinforcements he would organise a fresh

army—his own had been sorely tried by the fighting at Craonne and Laon—and with his strength recuperated he would reach the plateau of Langres, *via* Bar-le-Duc, and this time, instead of making a frontal attack on Schwarzenberg, he would fall on his rear.

He had not a moment to lose, for, once again, he was the victim of frantic appeals from the lieutenants he had left to face Schwarzenberg. It will be remembered that he had charged Macdonald and Oudinot with the task of keeping watch on the Allied retreat, the one on the Seine and the other on the Aube, and to enable them to withstand any attempt at a renewal of the offensive, he had given them more men than he had himself taken to the Aisne. But Oudinot, having advanced on Bar-sur-Aube, had met with unexpected resistance there on the 27th of February; for Schwarzenberg, on being informed of the Emperor's departure, had plucked up courage again, and without stopping the retreat of the bulk of his forces on Langres, had halted part of his army. The

**Oudinot and  
Macdonald  
Defeated.**

encounter was all the more of a shock for Oudinot because he had not expected it, and he failed to hold his ground. Macdonald, hurrying up to the rescue, was unable to save the situation, and the two Marshals, duly impressed, thought only of getting back to Troyes. On seeing this, Schwarzenberg again attacked them with one of his corps. Oudinot, demoralised by the unexpected rebuff he had received at Bar-sur-Aube, prevailed upon Macdonald, who was ill, to abandon even Troyes, where they could easily have held out for some days. And unwilling though he was to advance on Paris again, Schwarzenberg was once more almost driven to do so by the retreat—the entirely unjustified retreat—of the forces confronting him. After abandoning Troyes, Macdonald did not feel safe even at Nogent and fell back on Provins, while Oudinot, now in his turn dragged in his colleague's wake, followed

## NAPOLEON ON THE AISNE

behind. When the news reached the Emperor at Berry-au-Bac, he was utterly dumfounded. "I can hardly credit such ineptitude," he wrote. "Nobody could be more badly seconded than I am. I left a fine army at Troyes, but it has no soul!" Unless he himself was present there was no soul anywhere.

**An Army  
Without  
a Soul!**

By great good fortune, Schwarzenberg, still a prey to his apprehensions, returned westwards extremely slowly, because it went against the grain with him. And when he entered Troyes again, almost in spite of himself, he was fully determined to advance no further.

The armistice conferences at Lusigny had been broken off, and the Châtillon negotiations were also to end in smoke. The Coalition, reunited by the Treaty of Chaumont, had recovered its assurance in the realm of diplomacy. Caulaincourt, at Châtillon, could not fail to perceive this, and now despaired of ever securing the natural frontiers. Unless the frontiers of 1791 were accepted within a week the Allied plenipotentiaries would take their departure. But nobody knew better than they did that for a long time they had merely been playing a farce. "For men of straw," wrote Stadion, "we have done more than could be expected of us." When, in one last desperate effort, the Duke of Vicenza again appealed to the Frankfort proposals, the English plenipotentiaries affected an air of astonishment, Castlereagh declaring that he had no official cognizance of any such proposals.

**The Congress  
of Châtillon  
Resumed.**

But the Allies did not even yet quite see eye to eye. And it was this that made Schwarzenberg, who was under Metternich's thumb, remain terrified of being dragged towards Paris. On the 10th of March he summoned another council of war at Chaumont and declared that he would not resume the offensive so long as Blücher, who seemed to have been almost paralysed for some days past, maintained an expectant attitude. Indeed, the Generalissimo's letters prove that he himself was trembling in his shoes. "If Blücher is beaten," he explained, "I wonder whether it would be wise to accept battle; for if I am defeated, what a triumph for Napoleon and what a humiliation for the Allied Sovereigns to be forced to recross

**Schwarzen-  
berg's Fears.**



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

the Rhine at the head of a beaten army!" Recross the Rhine! His fears had already driven him across!

As a matter of fact, Alexander now had a fresh factor at his disposal. On that same day, the 10th of March, there presented himself at Allied Headquarters a certain individual whose arrival, while giving rise to all manner of suspicions, was destined to have

**Vitrolles at Allied Headquarters.** the most important results. It was the Baron de Vitrolles. He had come from Paris to Chaumont, he explained, to deliver a letter from Talleyrand.

It was a mere scrap of paper of about six inches square, on which Nesselrode, who kept it, one day wrote the following words: "Note which decided the march on Paris." As a matter of fact, it was to Nesselrode that it was addressed. It ran as follows: "The person whom I am sending to you is worthy of all confidence; listen to him and be grateful to me. It is high time to be more definite. You are marching on crutches; use your

**The "Crutches" Note.** legs and desire what you can easily get." Nesselrode took Vitrolles to the Tsar, to Metternich and to Castlereagh. The Baron assured them that at

the mere appearance of the Allies outside Paris the Emperor would be overthrown and the Bourbons recalled. However, they allowed him to go without having committed themselves, though they encouraged him to go back to the capital, as "the co-operation of Paris was what should be secured with all possible speed." The impression left by the incident on the minds of the Sovereigns was that there were people waiting to help and guide them. They could not rid themselves of it, and in the end it gained the upper hand, and to some extent justifies Nesselrode's comment on the "crutches" note. From that moment the Allies felt more confident. The Châtillon conferences were dragging; on the 17th orders were sent to the plenipotentiaries to close them, and on the 19th this was done.

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The news that reached the Allies after the 10th, moreover, should have sufficed to restore their confidence. France was being invaded on all sides. In the south-west, Soult was playing a losing game; Wellington, who had crossed the Pyrenees, 298

## NAPOLEON ON THE AISNE

had defeated the Duke of Dalmatia at Orthez on the 27th of February, 1814, and the latter had made the mistake of falling back on Toulouse, leaving the road to Bordeaux open. Doubtless he had reckoned on the English General, who had the reputation of being cautious, not venturing so far with a whole French army on his flank; but, just at this juncture, Comte Louis de La Rochejaquelein presented himself at British Headquarters. He had been sent by Louis XVIII to the west and on his way through Bordeaux had discovered that a plot was being hatched there to proclaim the King as soon as the English arrived outside the town, the gates of which were to be opened to them. As a result of this Wellington, while himself remaining to confront Soult, had sent Beresford's corps to Bordeaux, and on the 10th of March the latter was only two days' march from the city.

**Wellington  
Invades the  
South-West.**

In the south-east, Augereau had decided on the 2nd of March to enter the campaign, but, flustered by Napoleon's peremptory orders, it was only with extreme reluctance that he advanced his troops. Moreover, it was too late; the fortnight he had lost had given time for the Prince of Hesse-Homburg to arrive from Germany, and hurl a body of 30,000 men between Vesoul and Lyons. This might not, perhaps, have frightened "the Augereau of Castiglione"; but "the top-boots of 1793" were a long way off now! On finding himself face to face with the Prince he immediately fell back on Lyons, where, with the enemy on his heels, he took refuge like a craven. When, eventually, he came out it was only to beat the most disgraceful retreat.

**Augereau's  
Cowardice.**

Meanwhile the whole of the north-east had been invaded. With Belgium submerged, Maison driven back on Lille and Carnot shut up in Antwerp, Bülow and Wintzingerode, as we know, had been able to effect contact with Blücher on the Aisne, while Geismar's volunteers—Geismar was a miniature Blücher—had flung themselves recklessly on to Artois and Picardy, and had already reached Noyon. True, he reported with some anxiety that a bitter and merciless guerrilla war was being waged on him by "the blue blouses," bands of peasants who had taken up arms and were often commanded by patriotic parish priests.

**The North-  
East Invaded.**

**The Peasant  
Rising.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Indeed, the northern and eastern provinces, already on the verge of revolt, seemed ripe for a general insurrection. Napoleon regarded this as favourable for attempting a grand manœuvre which would carry him from the Aisne district to Saint-Dizier; he hoped to win the support of the whole of the Ardennes, Champagne, and Lorraine, and the orders he gave were calculated to encourage the peasants to rise. He also expected the northern garrisons to join him and with the people up in arms and hailing him as saviour, he would fall on Schwarzenberg's rear with these fresh troops. During those days in Soissons he appeared truly superhuman. When everything was crumbling

**Napoleon  
Truly  
Superhuman.**

about his head he rose to his full height, apparently still confident of being able to support the tottering edifice single-handed. "Napoleon was admirable after Laon," wrote one of his enemies, General von Bismarck, who was serving under Blücher at the time. "Never was his greatness displayed in more brilliant fashion."

He felt that it was, above all, essential to keep open his communications *via* Rheims with the north-east. On the 11th he heard that the Russian corps under Saint-Priest had fallen on the town and driven out Corbineau's division—a wonderful opportunity for him to restore his prestige which had been seriously undermined at Laon! And he hurled Marmont's corps against Rheims, himself following close behind. Saint-Priest

**Victory of  
Rheims.**

was driven out, crushed and decimated, and on the evening of the 13th, Napoleon entered the city, which, in a spontaneous outburst, illuminated its houses and acclaimed the victor. "Fortune's last smile," wrote Marmont. Blücher was filled with consternation. For a moment General "Vorwärts" seemed done for; he was very ill, and therefore inclined to be pessimistic. His inertia, which was merely temporary, astonished Schwarzenberg after so many reckless displays of audacity, and played into the hands of Napoleon, who, at a stone's throw from this strong enemy force, was apparently quite at his ease.

The Emperor, thus freed, made preparations to put his great plan of veering eastwards into execution. Schwarzenberg had a presentiment of his intention and became more agitated every day. But Napoleon was being importuned with appeals from the two

## NAPOLEON ON THE AISNE

Marshals, Oudinot and Macdonald, which, in spite of his cool self-confidence, occasionally perturbed him. Ought he to believe them when they assured him that Schwarzenberg really was marching on Paris? Would it be wise to go so far away when he was also receiving the worst possible news from the capital?

\* \* \* \* \*

For an extremely serious event had taken place which was destined completely to subvert public opinion in Paris. On the 12th of March the English corps under Beresford had arrived within an hour's march of Bordeaux, and Lynch, the mayor, who only a few weeks previously had given vent to the loudest protestations of loyalty, had delivered the town into his hands, hoisted the white standard everywhere, and summoned the Duc d'Angoulême, who for some weeks past had been waiting behind the English lines for an opportunity to make his appearance. The Prince had been received with acclamations; he had attended a *Te Deum* in the cathedral and had installed himself at the prefecture, over which the white standard with the Bourbon fleur-de-lis was flying. The event, serious enough in itself, was particularly tragic in its repercussions; it was an encouragement to the Allies, while in Paris, above all, public opinion veered round completely.

**The  
Bordeaux  
"Revolution."**

After the brief period of intoxication following upon the great victories of February it had subsided into gloom. On the 25th there had been another salute of guns to celebrate Napoleon's entry into Troyes. "When the reason is known," wrote a certain well-informed high official, "the first feeling will be one of regret at finding that it is only a victory!" It was really the Government itself that was most demoralised. On the 2nd of March, thinking that he would make it rise up in indignation, Napoleon had communicated to it the "shameful" proposals put forward at Châtillon, which Joseph was to read to the assembled Council. The Lieutenant-General called a meeting for the 4th of March, but when the terms were read there were no signs of indignation, but merely of gloomy consternation, and Joseph, writing to the Emperor, declared point-blank that "the necessity of seeing France reduced to the territory she possessed

**Strange  
Behaviour of  
the Council.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

in 1792 should be accepted rather than expose the capital." On the 9th he even felt it necessary to insist on this; the Emperor "could sign with glory a peace accepting the ancient boundaries."

Napoleon, almost more astounded than indignant, did not reply; whereupon the Council, hoping to force his hand, discussed drawing up an address to the Master signed by the Ministers, the Senators and the Councillors of State, facing him with the alternative of either making peace at any price or else abdicating. They

were already collecting the signatures when  
**Napoleon's Indignation.** Napoleon, warned in time, wrote a fulminating

letter to Savary: "Please note that if an address subversive of authority had been drawn up I should have had the King (Joseph), my Ministers and all who signed it arrested. I will have nothing to do with tribunes of the people; don't forget—I myself am the great tribune." And Joseph, in his turn, received a crushing call to order.

But the episode of the address left him a prey to the deepest anxiety. These were the people to whom, if he went further afield, he would have to entrust the task of organising the defence of the capital should Macdonald and Oudinot give way. He knew that the Châtillon conferences were on the point of being broken off. What effect would the rupture have on Paris? Yet he continued to cherish the idea of his grand manœuvre, though he wanted to find out for himself the truth about Schwarzenberg, whom the Marshals declared to be marching on the capital. Leaving Marmont at Berry-au-Bac and Mortier at Rheims in order, if

necessary, to hold Blücher, he went in person to  
**Napoleon Changes His Plans.** Épernay. Here the news of the Bordeaux "revolution," together with the echo of the subversive comment it had inspired in Paris, reached his ears.

In these circumstances, how could he possibly risk his great movement eastwards? He tried to think out another plan. Since the weakness of all about him forced him to prudence, he determined to attack Schwarzenberg, not in the rear but on the flank between Chaumont and Provins, where the lines of the Bohemian Army had been too thinly extended. Accordingly, on the 17th of March, after having summoned Macdonald and Oudinot to join him, he fell upon Arcis with the remnants of his little army—23,000 men, whom he recklessly hurled against 100,000.

## NAPOLÉON ON THE AISNE

The Sovereigns were at Troyes with Schwarzenberg, and the news of Napoleon's approach, which spread like wildfire, almost threw them into a panic. The Tsar, who until that moment had always been in favour of energetic action, was the first to suggest making the whole army fall back on Chaumont. For once it was Schwarzenberg who, in the midst of the general consternation, gave evidence of determination, and maintained that since the advance guard corps had already been sent westwards, it was too late to do this. They must close their ranks with all speed, face the enemy, accept battle, and even take the offensive. It was still

### **Battle of Arcis.**

the fear of being attacked by Napoleon at Langres and cut off that inspired such unusual resolution in his pusillanimous breast. On the 18th he made all his corps march on Arcis. Napoleon gave them such a reception that Schwarzenberg decided that very night to abandon the offensive; so great had been the valour of the French that he came to the conclusion he had been deceived regarding the forces Napoleon had at his disposal and which he now over-estimated, believing them to be double, and even treble their actual number. But the Emperor, who had at first been under the impression that he had barely a third of the Bohemian Army against him, inferred from the strength of the attack that he had the whole of it on his hands, closely knit, concentrated and invincible. His one thought, therefore, was to "get out of it." On the 19th he made merely a

### **Napoleon Slips Away.**

feint attack, and when the Allies, moving from all directions, thought they had surrounded him, they encountered a mere screen of troops—Sebastiani at the head of his cavalry—while Napoleon had slipped away and was already on the road to Vitry.

He had resumed his original plan in its entirety, or rather had thought out two. Making for Bar-le-Duc and from there sending an appeal to all the garrisons in the east, from Mayence to Verdun, he would march with them either on Metz or Langres. Meanwhile he was gathering together all his forces; Macdonald and Oudinot having joined him with 30,000 men, he also summoned Mortier and Marmont, whom he believed still to be at Berry and Rheims with their 20,000 men. With the eastern garrisons, already on the *qui vive* and awaiting his orders to join him, he would before long have 120,000 men—enough to defeat the enemy ten times

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

over—especially as he was still relying on Augereau, of whose dastardly conduct he had not yet heard, to advance with the object of also falling on Schwarzenberg's rear with his 40,000 men. He had sent orders to Suchet to go to Lyons with his army, and as soon as the Duke of Albufera arrived he intended to make that excellent General take the place of the unreliable Duke of Castiglione. He had written to Paris giving instructions for all the battalions and guns which were not absolutely necessary for the defence of the capital to be sent to him. True, when, following upon Macdonald and Oudinot, Mortier and Marmont had joined him, Paris would be uncovered for a few days; but he deliberately

### **Napoleon at Saint-Dizier.**

ran this risk, convinced that, at the news of his arrival at Saint-Dizier, Schwarzenberg would beat a retreat and summon Blücher to the rescue. The important point was for Paris not to be alarmed. In less than a week his great victory in the east would relieve the capital of all anxiety.

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On the 23rd he was already at Saint-Dizier, merely waiting to fall upon Langres until the troops he had summoned arrived. He was even expecting 2,000 of the Paris National Guard whom he had left at Sézanne in command of Pauthod, to escort through the danger-zone a huge convoy of artillery which Clarke should have

### **Caulaincourt Returns.**

sent him, together with Compans' division. He was confident, almost jubilant, and seemed to have raised the spirits of those about him, when a man with consternation written on every feature suddenly presented himself. It was Caulaincourt.

He had returned from Châtillon completely demoralised. He broke out into lamentations and gave utterance to the most gloomy predictions, whereupon the all too recent enthusiasm of the Marshals evaporated. In a few hours they were muttering—aside, but loud enough for the Emperor to hear—that the projected manœuvre was madness and that they were rushing to perdition. Napoleon almost laughed up his sleeve: "Wait and see!" On the 23rd of March he was organising the great insurrection of the eastern provinces; from the Ardennes as well as from the Vosges, the reports were most favourable; at the first sound of

## NAPOLÉON ON THE AISNE

his guns the people, already on the *qui vive*, would fall upon the enemy's communications, destroy his convoys, and prepare to cut off his retreat to the Rhine. "An imperial Vendée!" a "revolutionary Vendée!" Meanwhile the gates of the blockaded towns were already being thrown open; the garrisons were marching out of Metz, Thionville and Verdun; Broussier was making ready to leave Strassburg. The Emperor's plan, fantastic as it may have appeared, was being justified and was already on the point of being realised.

And the Allies? They should have been surging back on Langres;—strange that there should be no sign of their advance guards! Ah, there they were! And, indeed, on the 25th, at Doulevant, he fell in with a large cavalry force; the van of Schwarzenberg's army in full retreat, no doubt! He broke their line, surrounded them and took 2,000 prisoners. On being questioned they revealed the truth. It was terrible! The cavalry corps had merely been sent to throw dust in the Emperor's eyes and detain him; as a matter of fact, for the last twenty-four hours, all the Allied armies had been marching on Paris. Anxious to make sure, Napoleon went to Vitry for news. It was true! The Allies, who at first had been distracted, had pulled themselves together, and facing the risk of leaving Napoleon in their rear, were hastening to Paris, where treachery was awaiting them "with open arms."

**Napoleon  
Prepared to  
Catch the  
Retreating  
Enemy.**

**The Allies  
March on  
Paris.**

For SOURCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY see the end of Chapter L.



## CHAPTER L

### THE STRUGGLE FOR PARIS AND THE CAPITULATION OF THE CITY

The Allied Ministers decide in favour of marching on Paris. Schwarzenberg wishes to effect contact with Blücher on the Marne and then fall back on Vitry. The Tsar, at Sommepeuis, persuades him to march on Paris. The whole of the Allied army on the move. At Fère-Champenoise it drives Mortier and Marmont back on Paris; Pachtod's National Guards crushed in the marshes of Saint-Gond. Inadequacy of the measures taken in Paris; Joseph incapable of organising. Talleyrand undermines the Government. The Marshals in the suburbs of Paris. The Council of the 28th of March; the evacuation of the Queen Regent and the Government decided upon; consternation of the people. The Battle of Paris; the Romainville plateau. Joseph "authorises" the Marshals to capitulate. The latter hold their ground, but soon afterwards lose their positions from Belleville to Montmartre; Moncey at the Gate of Clichy. The people await Napoleon. He hastens back. The Marshals parley with the enemy's envoys. Marmont sends the Tsar his terms of capitulation. Talleyrand's trickery; he succeeds in remaining in Paris. The night of the 30th to the 31st at the Hôtel de Raguse; Talleyrand's visit. Marmont signs the capitulation.

**O**N the 20th of March, 1814, while the Battle of Arcis was being fought, Hardenberg was writing: "The Allied Generals would have to make the most extraordinary mistakes for us not to be masters of Paris in ten or twelve days."

#### **Decision to March on Paris.**

The Coalition diplomats were now agreed on the march to Paris. Even Metternich had come round to this point of view. Ever since the arrival of Vitrolles with a message from Talleyrand, that astute personage knew that the latter was working for the Bourbons and not for the Regency, and from that moment he abandoned all hope of realising his original design of leaving it to the agitators in Paris to replace Napoleon I by Napoleon II, the scion of the Habsburgs. He now resigned himself to abandoning "the blood of Austria" and supporting the "Bourbon" solution. But Vitrolles had declared that nothing would be done unless the Allies appeared at Montmartre. They must do so! No sooner had

## THE STRUGGLE FOR PARIS

the diplomats reached an agreement, however, than Schwarzenberg announced his disapproval and his intention to retreat,

**Schwarzen-  
berg  
Protests.**

declaring that the laws of strategy, to which he had been appealing for the last three months, forbade him to march on Paris and leave Napoleon in the rear. He was anxious to set out for Langres again with all possible speed, so as to reach that place before the Emperor. With the object of getting his new plan of retreat sanctioned, he summoned a council of war on the 23rd at Pougy, between Arcis and Brienne, at which the Sovereigns were present. While it was sitting one of the Emperor's mails, which had been intercepted, was brought in. The most important missive was a letter in which Napoleon informed Marie Louise of the manœuvre he was attempting and of all he expected from it; it was quite clear that he was aiming at cutting the Allies off from the Rhine, and it was no less obvious that he hoped the latter would fall back on receiving the news of his march on Saint-Dizier. After a long and excited debate, the Allies decided not to retire to Langres or to march direct on Paris. Blücher, it was argued, had been left isolated on the Aisne; the first step to take was to get into touch with him; the Seine and the Aube were to be abandoned, but only with the object of marching on Châlons, wither the old Prussian was to be summoned and, as soon as contact had been effected between all the Coalition forces, they were to swoop down on Napoleon between Vitry and Metz—"a plan," wrote one of the Allied Generals, "which was the outcome of perplexity," and was really a retreat in disguise.

This decision—if it could be called a decision—having been reached and a general movement on Châlons having started,

**Napoleon's  
Mail  
Intercepted.**

another intercepted mail was brought to Schwarzenberg. This time it consisted of letters addressed to Napoleon from Paris; among others, one from Savary begging the Emperor to return to the capital, where a number of "influential persons" were no longer concealing their hostility; there was no saying what they might do if the enemy approached Paris. Apparently, the Austrian Generalissimo attached no importance to the information given or confirmed, but had the despatches which had been seized conveyed to the Tsar, who, like himself,

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

was already nearing Sommeppuis on the way to Châlons. They reached there at dawn on the 24th and were met with news calculated to put everything back into the melting-pot. Their object had been to fetch Blücher, but the old fellow had recovered from his temporary apathy and had set out for Épernay to join the main Allied army.

**Blücher**

**Recovers.**

The news of Napoleon's departure for Arcis had put fresh heart into him. As a matter of fact, he should have run into Marmont and Mortier, but they had left the road clear and—what was even more serious—instead of closing in round Mortier at Rheims, whence they could easily have effected contact with Napoleon, as he had given them precise instructions to do, Marmont was dragging Mortier westwards. They were falling back on Fismes and on Château-Thierry, which would cut them off for good from the imperial army. Thus Blücher had been able to carry out his intention with the greatest ease and had once more got into touch with Schwarzenberg. On learning this the latter was forced to the conclusion that instead of making for Châlons he ought to march his forces on Vitry and fall upon the Emperor there. Immediate orders to veer right were given, and Schwarzenberg and the King of Prussia left Sommeppuis for Vitry. They might almost have been hypnotised, willy-nilly, into obeying the terrible adversary who had determined they should turn their backs on Paris.

The Tsar, however, was still perplexed. Deeply impressed by the letters from Paris, he held a consultation with his own little General Staff and converted them to his point of view—deliberately to march on Paris. Jumping on to his horse, he caught Schwarzenberg and the King of Prussia up between Sommeppuis and Vitry. He drew them aside on to some rising ground skirted by the road along which

**The Tsar**

**Convinces**

**Schwarzenberg.**

the armies were marching eastwards, and it was here that the fate of the war, of the Emperor and of France was sealed. After a moment's hesitation, Schwarzenberg consented to an entire change of plan.

There was a vast right-about-face, and the whole army turned west again towards Paris; 10,000 horse were detached and sent off in the direction of Saint-Dizier to throw dust in the Emperor's eyes. On the 25th of March the two armies, this time keeping in

## THE STRUGGLE FOR PARIS

close touch, marched in parallel lines on the capital, Blücher resting his right on the Marne and Schwarzenberg his left on the Aube. The only resistance with which these 150,000 men, with a body of 20,000 horse in the van, could possibly meet now was confined to "forces" inevitably condemned to be swept aside—the pitiful little handful of 16,000 men under the two Marshals Mortier and Marmont, who were fluttering about between the Seine and the Marne, and the wretched body of 3,000 National Guards under Pacthod whom the "division" of 2,000 conscripts under Compans, sent to Napoleon from Paris, had just joined at Sézanne.

The Marshals, ever since they had disobeyed the Emperor's express command and borne left, were wandering about in search of a route which would lead them back to Napoleon without undue risk.

**The Marshals  
Wandering  
About.**

On the 23rd, at Bergères, they ran into some of Blücher's troops, and decided to make for Fère-Champenoise, whence it might perhaps be possible to reach Vitry. It was also towards Fère-Champenoise that Pacthod and Compans were making their way with the same object in view. On arriving at Sommesous, Marmont and Mortier ran up against the huge main body of the Allies. They fought extremely bravely for some hours, but when they were on the point of being completely overwhelmed, they fell back on Fère-Champenoise, still fighting, and seeing that it was obviously impossible for them to hold out there, they retreated definitely in the direction of Paris.

Meanwhile Pacthod and Compans had also fallen in with the main Allied army as it surged on Paris. Between Sézanne and Fère-Champenoise they first of all met the enemy's cavalry. Compans had been able to fall back on Sézanne, with his little division, but Pacthod, who had flung himself into the Saint-Gond marshes, was quickly surrounded and attacked there. The 3,000 National Guards, forming squares, defended themselves with the resolution of veterans, and after a heroic resistance which won the admiration even of their adversaries, they surrendered, only when they had been reduced to a mere handful.

**Pacthod  
Surrounded.**

The Marshals had now made up their minds to fall back on

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

**Paris.** But they should have marched straight there with the utmost possible speed *via* Meaux. Had they arrived by the 26th they would have been able to reconnoitre the positions and organise the defence.

**The Marshals  
Fall Back.**

But for no apparent reason they took a roundabout way *via* Provins, where they separated, having arranged to meet on Charenton Bridge on the 28th. They had gone all the way to Moscow and now they had returned to Charenton!\*

On the 28th the Allies, in their turn, arrived in sight of Paris. A loud cry of joy rose from their ranks, for by taking Paris they would be killing two birds with one stone. "The fellow is run to earth!" wrote Stein.

\* \* \* \* \*

But if Paris could hold out only for three days, he was not "run to earth." Whether with an army which grew mysteriously larger every day he adhered to his plan of attacking the recklessly advancing Allies on the flank, or whether by means of forced marches he fell upon them while a desperate resistance obliged them to remain outside Paris, it was still possible for the Emperor to restore the situation and save the country. True, the city was denuded of fortifications, and, in spite of Napoleon's urgent

**Clarke's  
Inadequate  
Preparations.**

warnings, the preparations made for defence by Clarke during the last two months were quite inadequate. But the surrounding circle of hills made it possible for even an improvised defence to be prolonged for at least a few days. True, the "forces," if they could be dignified by that name, which the Lieutenant-General had at his disposal, were third-rate. But, as luck would have it, two excellent corps arrived in the nick of time, and if they had found positions already prepared for them, they could have installed themselves and held their ground for those few days.

**Joseph's  
Ineptitude.**

But nobody had thought of it! Joseph, who had been entrusted with the supreme command, was utterly incapable of exercising it. And when chance placed two great Generals, Marmont and Mortier, at his disposal, all he could do was to discourage them. They were

\* It is impossible to give the full savour of the sarcasm here, as Charenton is the equivalent of the English Bedlam.

## THE STRUGGLE FOR PARIS

far too quick in abandoning all hope of success. Coming up, largely through their own fault, at the eleventh hour, to cling as best they could to positions they had not had time to study, they put up a valiant defence for one day without it ever entering their heads that, rather than surrender, they should hold out to the last man. What was lacking to the defence was that as well as having no brains it was utterly devoid of soul!

And yet, surely, a Government, promoted to the rank of a Regency Council to advise a young Empress, should have had some soul! But, at this juncture, the Government possessed no more soul than brains. Under Joseph, who had long since become quite useless, the Ministers were no longer governing; they were utterly and completely at sea. And to make matters worse, in the Council treachery was also insinuating itself for the purpose of exploiting the cowardice it found there.

Treachery was incarnate in the person of Talleyrand. As Vice-Grand Elector, he attended every meeting of the Council; he left them fully primed, and returned to his house in the Rue Saint-Florentin, where his accomplices were awaiting his instructions. For weeks past his one desire had been to see the Allies outside the gates of Paris; Schwarzenberg's "truly Austrian" dilatoriness was "inconceivable," he declared. Royalist agents besieged his room; he encouraged them, but in the evening returned to the Tuileries with a smile to join in his rubber of whist with the Empress. Playing the part of both courtier and conspirator, he lay in ambush in the Council, awaiting the opportunity to deal the traitor's blow at the régime whose servant he was supposed to be. What could be expected of a Government that was completely demoralised, and in which, moreover, the enemy had a seat?

On the 28th the two Marshals at last reached the outskirts of Paris. It was high time; already the Allied armies, coming up from the east, were closing round the city—  
**The Allies** 150,000 men advancing on the Clichy-Vincennes  
**Close Round** sector in three bodies, Blücher on the right,  
**Paris.** Schwarzenberg on the left, and the Crown Prince of Württemberg in the centre. They expected to be in a position to attack on the 29th.

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Joseph did not wait any longer to lay a decision of the utmost importance before the Regency Council; there was nothing heroic about it, since it meant packing up and going. As a matter of fact, he had for the last six weeks had in his hands the letter written by the Emperor at Nogent during the agonising night of the 7th to the 8th of February, telling him, in the event of the enemy approaching Paris, to evacuate the Empress, the King of Rome and all the Government officials and to make for the Loire. As we know, the Emperor had sent the order in a moment of anguish; it was unwise; to send away the Empress and her child meant depriving the defence of its last remnant of soul; as for imagining that the Government, when once it was established on the Loire, would make itself obeyed—that was a pure illusion. No longer, as in 1792, when the capital was menaced, and his colleagues in the executive Council wished to abandon it, was Danton's stentorian voice to be heard bellowing "France is in Paris!" Nevertheless, Joseph hesitated to take the responsibility of obeying an order that perhaps no longer held good.

The Council met on the 28th, at half-past eight in the evening. Joseph, in order to allow it absolute freedom of discussion, did not at first reveal the contents of the letter of the 8th, and pretended to ask its advice. Ought they to go? Clarke was in favour of doing so, but he was the only one; the others protested—their departure would discourage the people and the army. Joseph had the vote taken and retaken; the Council twice voted almost unanimously against the idea of retreating. Whereupon the Lieutenant-General took from his pocket the famous letter of the 8th of February and read it aloud. It was already very stale—a fact to which he should have drawn attention—and recent events might have modified the Emperor's ideas. But the Council, accustomed to bowing to the Master's orders, raised no further objections and merely seemed overwhelmed with grief. It was decided that the Empress should set out on the following morning for Rambouillet with the little King; Cambacères, who was completely overcome, and the Treasury were to accompany her; after which, the Ministers having followed, they were all to pro-

## THE STRUGGLE FOR PARIS

ceed to Blois and transfer the Government to the banks of the Loire. The meeting ended at two o'clock in the morning. Talleyrand felt they had just committed the supreme folly he was awaiting and he had the effrontery partially to reveal his hand to Savary: "It is not everybody's game to submit to be smothered by the ruins of the edifice," he observed. "Some such thought suggests itself now." The Duke of Rovigo made no reply to this insinuation. He should immediately have clapped this dangerous personage into a coach and had him escorted by ten stout gendarmes to Blois before the Empress herself set out.

Marie Louise made her preparations; to her credit be it said that she did so with evident sorrow and reluctance. All through the night she hoped the arrangement would be cancelled, and it was not until half-past ten on the 29th that she decided to set out. The little King, moved by some strange instinct, refused to leave.

### **The Empress Prepares to Go.**

"Don't go to Rambouillet, mamma," he exclaimed. "It is a horrid place." And he struggled in the arms of Canisy, the equerry. "I don't want to leave home!" he screamed. "I don't want to go! As papa isn't here, I am master!" In the infant son the blood of the terrible father, so soon to be stifled, was already crying aloud. Half an hour later the Empress and her suite left Paris

### **Consternation of the People.**

under the eyes of the horrified populace; in the middle of the other carriages there was the Coronation coach covered with tarpaulins! The Coronation coach in that funeral procession!

In obedience to the Emperor's orders, Joseph should have made the personages his brother had taken care to specify follow immediately behind the Empress, "the grand dignitaries, the Ministers, and the officials of the Senate." There can be no manner of doubt that Napoleon had one particular man in mind—the Vice-Grand Elector, the Prince of Benevento. The departure of the Empress was in itself open to grave objections, but to leave this man in Paris was far worse. Joseph apparently did not take this view; he allowed the persons mentioned by the Emperor twenty-four hours in which to leave the capital—quite long enough for all manner of hocus-pocus. The news of this exodus seemed to fill the people with consternation; they were told that the Master had ordered it. "It was the



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

first time I heard the people blame the Emperor," declared one eye-witness.

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Meanwhile Clarke was all bustle and activity; he drafted sixty letters or notes in three days; he could be energetic only at the point of the pen. "The safety of the State may depend on being able to hold the enemy for two or three days," he wrote to Compans. But the enemy was not held for thirty hours.

**Clarke's  
Epistolatory  
Zeal.**

The Allies were determined to risk all to take Paris or induce it to capitulate before that time. They had reached the capital as the result of a decision far too hastily taken not to have deplorable consequences. They had exhausted their supplies and, worse still, were extremely short of munitions. "Paris must surrender to-morrow!" declared the Tsar, on tenterhooks of anxiety. And at enormous risk he despatched an envoy at the earliest possible moment to the front line; but he was sent back by Compans.

**The Tsar's  
Anxiety.**

On the 29th no fighting took place; the Marshals spent the whole day taking up their positions and the enemy in consolidating their strategic bases. The key to the defence was the Romainville plateau north of Pantin, and it was towards this plateau that Marmont was rushing his troops *via* Charonne and Montreuil, while Mortier, upon whom had devolved the task of defending the north, was making a dash for Villette, La Chapelle, and Montmartre. But they were so late in arriving that, on the night of the 29th, they found the Romainville plateau already occupied by a corps of Russians.

**Romainville  
Occupied by  
Russians.**

At dawn, on the 30th, the plateau was recaptured, and this initial success seemed to be a good omen. Blücher, cursing and swearing, was taking a long time to get a footing in the plain of Saint-Denis, and since the heroic defence put up by the little town was hampering his movements, the Allies' offensive was delayed. The French rank and file, it seemed, were determined to do or die, while their chiefs were eager to make the most of their admirable ardour.

It was the wretched Joseph who poured cold water on this

## THE STRUGGLE FOR PARIS

fine fire of enthusiasm. Taking his position of Commander-in-Chief seriously—for once—he had gone at six

**Joseph  
Watches the  
Battle.**

o'clock in the morning and taken up his stand on the Butte Montmartre, from which he obtained a bird's-eye view of the battle. But the sight of the endless Allied columns on the march made a deep impression on his pusillanimous heart. However, having summoned Clarke, the Minister of War, and Hulin, the Governor of Paris, to a council of war, he seemed to agree with them that the battle should be allowed to take its course. But just at this moment an officer of the National Guard, an architect named Peyre, arrived on the scene. On the previous evening Hulin had taken the unprecedented step of sending him to Bondy to discover the Tsar's intentions. He had been charmed by the gracious reception accorded him. The Tsar had assured him, on his word of honour, that if Paris surrendered the city would be protected from outrage; otherwise he could answer for nothing. Joseph seemed to regard this information as most important and calculated to made the advisability of continuing the defence extremely doubtful. As a matter of fact, terrified at the sight of the preparations that were being made to take the city by storm, he was anxious to find an excuse; but stranger still, the Council of War, though composed of regular Army men, was whole-heartedly with him. They all jumped to the conclusion that to continue the defence meant losing Paris. Joseph accordingly despatched

**Joseph  
Authorises  
Capitulation.**

two of his aides-de-camp, one to Marmont and the other to Mortier, with a note "authorising" them, "if they could not hold their ground," to "enter into negotiations" and "retire to the Loire"; after which this strange Commander-in-Chief went back to the Luxembourg Palace, got into his carriage and set out for Rambouillet.

After this, the Marshals would have to have been possessed of considerable strength of will to defend Paris resolutely for any length of time. Joseph had virtually told them to

**The Marshals  
Hold Their  
Ground.**

flee for their lives. Fortunately, neither of the Marshals received the note until somewhat late in the day, when they had already come to grips with the enemy. They succeeded in holding their positions the whole

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

morning; as a matter of fact, the attacks of the Allies, who were not yet properly concentrated, were somewhat half-hearted. This continued till midday, when suddenly the assaults became violent and, before long, desperate and determined. Marmont's men put up a heroic defence against the repeated waves of attack which they succeeded in breaking for a long time, but the enemy always returned to the assault. Two divisions of the Prussian Guard were annihilated in this hand-to-hand fighting, but, as a result of these desperate struggles, the French were obliged to give ground and fall back on Belleville from the Romainville plateau, which had been captured by Barclay de Tolly. At Belleville another gallant stand was made, and the Charonne-Clichy line remained intact for over four hours longer. But the attack was increasing in intensity; to the Allied General Staff the fall of Paris before nightfall seemed a matter of life and death. For three hours Marmont, sword in hand, defended Belleville against this savage onslaught. Had he not felt Joseph's note in his breast-pocket he would perhaps have held out longer. He was an extremely brave soldier, but he was not a hero.

**Marmont  
Asks for an  
Armistice.**

He saw his exhausted men falling back inch by inch, and gradually melting away, and he sent Schwarzenberg three envoys to offer an armistice, while he made preparations to return to Paris.

Meanwhile Mortier, attacked at La Villette and La Chapelle, had held his ground well. He was a rough, rude soldier who feared neither God nor man. But as the loss of Belleville by Marmont left his right wing exposed he was taken in the flank. As a matter of fact, old Marshal Moncey, on his left, was defending the gate of Clichy with admirable tenacity long after Montmartre and Les Batignolles had fallen. In short, by the time it was getting dark the defenders had only been driven out of their advanced positions; the Marshals' tiny little army was still in possession of the outside boulevards, the real ramparts of Paris, where they could certainly have held out for another day. And when these boulevards had been taken, street fighting, extremely costly to the enemy, could have been carried on even if the Emperor failed to make his appearance with his army during the day of the 31st.

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## THE STRUGGLE FOR PARIS

All day on the 30th the masses had been waiting for Napoleon. It was a typical Parisian crowd, apparently cynical and indifferent, but at heart genuinely moved and prepared, when the time came, to take a hand in the street fighting. The Parisian,

**The People  
Await  
Napoleon.**

who is a great theatre-goer, loves dramatic situations. Time and again the rumour went round that the Emperor was coming; he was at Meaux, at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, at Sceaux! "Here he is! Here he is!" they shouted again and again in the suburbs.

He had not arrived; but about one o'clock an officer, white with dust and ready to drop with exhaustion from his lame horse, dismounted at the Luxembourg. It was young General Dejean, who had been sent to announce Napoleon's approach. Having been unable to get into touch with Joseph and having lost far too much time searching for him, he had made for the firing line and presented himself to Marmont. But he was too late—the Marshals had decided to enter into negotiations.

**Dejean  
Arrives.**

Napoleon, warned on the 25th, had not received full confirmation of the Allied march on Paris until the 28th, and on the 29th had set his army on the march for Troyes. At Ablancourt he had received panic-stricken letters from Paris. Accelerating the march and taking the lead himself, he sent Dejean, hell for leather, along the Paris road to announce his arrival. Meanwhile Wessenberg, an important Austrian diplomatist, who had inadvertently blundered into the middle of the French troops, had been brought to him; he had sent him back to the Sovereigns to make them another offer in which he hinted that he was inclined

**Napoleon  
Willing to  
Abdicate.**

to abdicate in favour of the King of Rome. He was quite capable, he assured the Austrian, of putting the power into the hands of the Empress. On reaching Troyes on the evening of the 29th with the Guard, he also sent General de Girardin to Paris. The city had only to hold out for thirty-six hours; he would be there on the 31st before nightfall and take the enemy between two fires.

Dejean duly informed Marmont, but the latter merely replied by a gesture of fatigue. He had already sent an envoy to the Tsar. As a matter of fact, it was merely to discuss an armistice;

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

and as soon as Napoleon's message reached him it was his bounden duty to confine himself strictly to discussing an armistice which the Allies would undoubtedly endeavour to turn into a capitulation. Indeed, this was the task which the Tsar forthwith entrusted to Prince Orloff, who, at five o'clock in the evening, presented himself at the Duke of Ragusa's headquarters. The latter immediately accepted the idea of "settling the bases of the capitulation"; together with Mortier he would go to the gate of Pantin, where Orloff would find them. Both sides gave the order to cease fire. From that moment Marmont's function was at an end. It is only fair to say that Dejean, on reaching the valiant Mortier, found him almost as discouraged as Marmont, though, as a matter of fact, less inclined to admit the hypothesis of "capitulation."

On presenting himself at the rendezvous, the Duke of Ragusa found not only Orloff but also Nesselrode himself and Count Paar, one of Schwarzenberg's aides-de-camp. The Marshal took them to La Chapelle to meet Mortier and they proceeded to discuss matters in an inn. The terms suggested were so humiliating that twice Marmont threatened to break off the interview and defend the city inch by inch. Mortier had already left the meeting in disgust when eventually Marmont secured permission for the army to retire wherever its leaders thought fit, in return for which the Allies were to enter Paris on the following day. Nesselrode went back to find the Tsar and have the agreement ratified, while Marmont, accompanied by Orloff, returned to his house, which was close by, in the Rue du Paradis, very far from imagining that out of the frying-pan of battle he was to fall into the fire of politics.

As soon as the guns were silenced politics once more came to the fore; moreover, on the departure of the Government it did not take long for intrigues to break out.

The Government had fled, but on taking his departure Joseph had confined himself to giving the Ministers and grand dignitaries a mere "invitation" to follow. On the advice of Pasquier himself, the Prefect of Police, Talleyrand presented himself at the gate of Chaillot, where Rémusat, one of the Prince's intimate friends, who was in command of the detachment of National Guards and

## THE STRUGGLE FOR PARIS

had previously been warned of the farce that was being enacted, arrested him on the pretext "that he had no passports." Talleyrand feigned surprise and even indignation, but afraid Rémusat might change his mind, he hurried back as fast as he could to his house in the Rue Saint-Florentin.

**Talleyrand  
Remains in  
Paris.**

Pasquier himself, together with Chabrol, the Prefect, had gone to Marmont's house, where, during the Marshal's absence at La Chapelle, two hundred people had gathered—Senators, high officials, members of the municipal Council, and officers of the National Guard, all anxious to find out what was happening. Among them were a number of persons who had either always been hostile to the Emperor or had recently become so. The whole crowd of them were eager for the fighting to stop as quickly as possible, even if it meant capitulation, which they knew Marmont was at that moment discussing; at this juncture they were pinning their whole faith on the "intelligence" of the Marshal, who, after having defended Paris like a "hero"—for there was nothing but the highest praise for his conduct—was, they hoped, about "to save the city"—by delivering it to the enemy!

Suddenly he arrived. His mere presence, far away from his troops, indicated a "happy" issue. He was surrounded, acclaimed, almost carried in triumph, congratulated on having fought so well, even more heartily congratulated on having stopped fighting. He was overwhelmed with homage, praise and solicitude.

**Marmont  
Returns.**

Whereupon the Duke of Ragusa was informed that the Prince of Benevento had arrived and begged an audience. Marmont hastened to receive him in the dining-room—all the reception-rooms being full to overflowing. Apparently the Prince openly offered this soldier to co-operate with him in bringing about the restoration of the King, and the soldier, after some hesitation, refused. But Talleyrand had not come only for Marmont; he wished to show himself to this crowd—he was supposed to have gone—and let the whole gang, nearly all of whom were ready to turn traitor, see with their own eyes that the arch-traitor was really there. As he passed through the reception-rooms there was a general stir. "Sir," he said, going up to Prince Orloff and addressing him, "would

**Talleyrand  
Accosts Orloff.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

you be so good as to lay at the feet of his Majesty the Emperor of Russia the humble and respectful greetings of the Prince of Benevento.”—A further intimation to the Tsar that he really had somebody in Paris to whom he could talk.

At two o'clock on the morning of the 31st a messenger arrived from the Tsar authorising Orloff to agree to Marshal Marmont's conditions; and the latter signed the capitulation—the Allied troops were to enter Paris that same day at ten o'clock in the morning. It was forthwith decided that the two Prefects and some municipal councillors, who happened to be in the Duke of Ragusa's house, should accompany Orloff to Bondy to discuss with the Emperor of Russia the conditions to be imposed on the city.

### **The Capitulation Signed.**

Alexander, who had to be woken from his slumbers, received only Orloff at that early hour. He did not attempt to conceal his delight and relief from his compatriot. For he had little doubt that, in the circumstances, the fall of Paris meant the almost inevitable ruin both of the Emperor and his Empire.

SOURCES. *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XXVI and XXVII). Lecestre, *Lettres inédites*. Debrotonne, *Lettres inédites*. Weil, *Documents, lettres, ordres, journaux de marche*, published in *La Campagne de 1814*. Parnuit (soldier), *Lettres. Lettres de Dardennes* (in Bertin, 1814). Castellane, *Journal* (I). Memoirs and Reminiscences by Marmont, Macdonald, Victor, Pasquier (II). La Rochefoucauld-Doudeauville, Vitrolles, Villèle, Montbel, Frénilly, Pontécoulant, Savary, Caulaincourt, Madame de Chastenay, Aimée de Coigny, Madame de Rémusat, Broglie, Plancy, Sers, Molé, Comte de Damas, General de Lövenstern, General Grüber, General von Colomb, Metternich, and Steenackers (in Bertin).

WORKS. Those already mentioned by Sorel (VIII), Houssaye (1814), Lacour-Gayet, Madelin, Lefebvre de Bahaine, Weil, Morvan, and Masson (IX). Perceval, *Autour du Comte Lainé*. Marie de Roux, *La Restauration* (Ch. I). Stiegler, *Oudinot*. Lanrezac, *Cours de l'École de Guerre. Campagne de 1814*. Rovère, *La rive gauche du Rhin*. Bertin, *Campagne de 1814*. Masson, *Marie-Louise*. Madelin, *Bataille de l'Aisne* (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1918). Hennequin, *La Campagne de l'Aube*. Clausewitz, *Der Feldzug von 1814*. Vidal de la Blache, *L'évacuation de l'Espagne et l'invasion du Midi*. Colomb, *Blücher in Briefern*. Schoerr, *Blücher*.

# THE FALL OF THE EMPIRE

## CHAPTER LI

### THE ALLIES IN PARIS

The posting-house of the *Cour-de-France*. Napoleon arrives two hours too late. He wishes to march on Paris. But sends Caulaincourt there and takes up his quarters at Fontainebleau. Royalist demonstration in Paris; it fails. The entry of the Allies; the white armlets; the welcome given him by the bourgeoisie deceives the Tsar; the "angels of deliverance." The Tsar, closeted with Talleyrand, announces his refusal to treat with Napoleon or any member of his family. The intrigue in the Senate. It elects a provisional Government which makes Talleyrand its President. The declaration of the General Council. Caulaincourt fails in his endeavours with the Tsar. The Senate votes for the fall. Napoleon at Fontainebleau; he aims at recapturing Paris. He visits Marmont. The army ready to march on Paris; sullen opposition of the Marshals. They force the Emperor to abdicate. Conditional abdication. Caulaincourt, Ney and Marmont entrusted with the task of conveying the news to Paris.

ON the 30th of March, at the very moment when, at the Hôtel de Raguse, Marmont was being hailed as "the saviour of Paris" because he had proved ready to surrender the city, a carriage drew up at the posting-house of the *Cour-de-France* at Fromenteau, near Juvisy, ten miles away. The Emperor alighted while the horses were being changed; consumed with impatience he had left Berthier in command of his army at Troyes, with instructions to lead it to Fontainebleau, and with Caulaincourt, Drouot, Flahaut, Gourgaud and Lefebvre had galloped on towards Paris. At Villeneuve-sur-Vannes he had taken a carriage and driven hell for leather to the *Cour-de-France*, where the horses had to be changed. While he was waiting, consumed with anxiety and pacing nervously up and down the road, the sound of horses trotting, fell on his ears through the darkness—it was eleven o'clock at night. "Halt!" he cried. The leader dismounted. It was Belliard. At eight o'clock that evening the Marshals had so far decided to sign the capitulation that they had sent this body of cavalry to prepare cantonments for the army



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

which before dawn would be despatched from Paris to Fontainebleau. With a gasp of horror Napoleon hurriedly questioned Belliard, who informed him of all that had happened during the day. The Emperor could not contain himself! "Have they all lost their heads?" he exclaimed angrily. And turning to his companions, he added: "Did you hear? Come on, we must get to Paris! I can't be everywhere; but if I'm not there they all play the fool! Disgraceful! To capitulate! Joseph has lost everything! General Belliard, order the troops to go back!" It was only with the greatest difficulty that he was persuaded to abandon the mad idea of immediately rushing to Paris. But he sent Caulaincourt to find out how the land lay and report to him; if necessary he was "to negotiate and come to terms." At dawn a note from the Duke of Vicenza confirmed the news—the Allies were to enter Paris during the course of the morning. Napoleon was obliged to resign himself and at six o'clock he took the road to Fontainebleau.

**Napoleon  
Returns to  
Fontainebleau.**

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Caulaincourt had rushed to the Hôtel de Ville and, on being informed that the two Prefects had gone to the Tsar in the middle of the night, set out to join them at Bondy. But he met them half-way coming back to Paris. Having been received a few minutes previously with the utmost affability by Alexander, they gave a frigid welcome to Napoleon's envoy. When Caulaincourt, in his turn, tried to see the Tsar he was kept waiting until eight o'clock in the morning. Even then the Tsar avoided any pertinent discussion, telling him he could say nothing until the Allies had entered Paris.

**The Tsar  
Snubs  
Caulaincourt.**

The news of the capitulation, which was known about nine o'clock, was received with satisfaction by the bourgeoisie and to a certain extent with relief by everybody. The guns were silent and a nightmare seemed to have vanished. The Royalists made up their minds to turn this feeling to account. A band of young men, all of "good family," scoured Paris, wearing white armlets, shouting, "*Vive le Roi!*" and offering white cockades to the passers-by. Setting out from the Place de la Concorde, they

**Royalist  
Demonstra-  
tions.**

## THE ALLIES IN PARIS

made their way *via* the boulevards towards the Bastille. But, greeted with stony surprise in the bourgeois quarters, beyond the Gate of Saint-Denis, they were met with hoots and yells, and some were even roughly handled. There were cries of, "Down with the traitors! Down with the Royalists!" Apparently Paris was in no hurry to welcome the King.

On the other hand, partly from fear and partly from curiosity, the crowd seemed inclined to give a fairly favourable reception

**The Allies** to the Allied troops who, an hour later, at eleven  
**Enter Paris.** o'clock, entered Paris by the Gate of Pantin

They marched in perfect order; Alexander was between the King of Prussia and Schwarzenberg; he was all smiles and as he bowed cordially right and left, secured a few cheers, even in the working-class quarters. The Allies had been expecting insolence and disorder and they were agreeably surprised. Were these the formidable hordes of whom they had stood in so much dread? The feeling of relief increased and was very near developing into enthusiasm. It was noticed that all these thousands of soldiers in blue, red or green uniforms were

**The White** wearing a white brassard on the right arm. In  
**Armlets.** order to avoid mistakes the Allied soldiers had

for some weeks past adopted this distinguishing mark. Thus they entered Paris adorned with strips of all the sheets and napkins they had been able to lay hands on in Champagne. The fact that white happened to be the Royalist colour was declared to be a mere coincidence. But since it was impossible to explain this, Paris interpreted it as a sign that the Allies were "for the King." And the more faint-hearted took out their pocket-handkerchiefs and, to safeguard themselves from violence, also provided themselves with brassards. Thus the Allies, on their side, were led to believe that the city was giving expression to a political sentiment, whereas it was merely taking a somewhat pusillanimous precaution. Moreover, though the mass of the people had, on the whole, maintained a fairly frigid attitude, the cheering increased as the Allies advanced into the bourgeois quarters. The Royalists, recovering from their discomfiture, were haranguing the crowds, trying to make them shout "*Vive les Bourbons!* Down with the tyrant!" as well as, "*Vive Alexandrel!*" From the Boulevard des Italiens to the

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Champs-Élysées, the "crowd," which now consisted entirely of bourgeois and even aristocratic elements, seemed to grow more enthusiastic, and Alexander and Frederick William were whole-heartedly cheered. The entire Faubourg Saint-Germain had crossed the river, and

**The Sovereigns Cheered.**

when, on reaching the Champs-Élysées, the Allied General Staff halted to watch the final march past of the troops, ladies of the most exalted rank even demeaned themselves to ask the Cossacks, massed behind the Tsar, to hoist them up on to their horses so that they could get a better view of the troops and see the Tsar. But this disgraceful behaviour, which made the Sovereigns laugh, can hardly give rise to astonishment, seeing that on the same evening the Duchesse de Luynes wrote describing the Allies as "angels of deliverance." In the end the Tsar really believed that the country's one wish was to be "delivered" from the clutches of a hated despot. This is not one of the most glorious episodes in the annals of Paris.

Accompanied by Frederick William and Schwarzenberg, Alexander made his way to Talleyrand's house. They found the Duke of Dalberg there, already installed as the Prince's right-hand man, and an immediate epoch-

**The Tsar and Talleyrand.**

making discussion took place. Talleyrand pronounced himself emphatically against any except the Royalist solution. It was above all essential to build on "a principle," he declared; but there was only one principle—Louis XVIII was a principle, "he was the legitimate King." Never had the ex-Bishop of Autun, who in 1791 had betrayed his Church, his order and his King, appeared so devoted to "principles."

He did not immediately succeed in converting the Tsar to the Bourbons. Alexander had some difficulty in reaching a decision.

At last he consented to sign a declaration drafted by Dalberg in which "the Sovereigns proclaimed

**The Allies' Ultimatum.**

that they would no longer treat with Napoleon Bonaparte or any member of his family; that they would respect the integrity of Old France as she had existed under her legitimate Kings; that they would recognise and guarantee the constitution the French nation chose for itself." And the declaration proceeded: "Wherefore they invite the Senate immediately to designate a provisional Government with power to provide for the necessities

## THE ALLIES IN PARIS

of the administration and to prepare a Constitution acceptable to the French people." It was arranged that Talleyrand should summon the Senate, of whom, he declared, he was "sure."

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And, indeed, the Senate was probably the best place for the development of the intrigue. Having accepted everything—money and honours—from the "despot" whom **The Intrigue** they were now denouncing, the Senators were **in the Senate.** anxious to extricate themselves from the ruins of the régime, much of which was seriously compromised with the Revolution, and by a master-stroke save themselves from the reprisals the Bourbons would be sure to make as soon as they had been restored. After all, it was merely a matter of cutting the throat of the man who had overwhelmed them with offices and rewards, and as soon as he had been laid low, of handing over his head in return for promises of forgiveness and even of fresh honours from the brother of that Louis XVI whom, twenty-one years previously, some of them had conducted to the scaffold.

Moreover, ever since the evening of the 31st of March they had been caught up in the current which was making a whole world rush to the basest recantations, for, from the earliest hours of the crisis, a hectic craving for repudiation had constituted the dominant note in the imperial hierarchy.

On the 1st of April, 1814, the Senate met—or rather 64 of its members, carefully chosen by Talleyrand out of a total of 140.

**Talleyrand's** On the morning of that day these 64 had been  
**Note to the** presented with the following note: "The Prince of  
**Senate.** Benevento has received from His Majesty the  
Emperor Alexander an invitation to convey the proposals of the Powers to the Senate. He will present himself at the Palace of the Senate punctually at half-past three. He begs you to be so good as to attend." A French newspaper published in London reported that "at the command of the Emperor of Russia, the Senate assembled"—which more was or less the truth.

On that day this gang confined themselves to appointing a

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

provisional Government consisting of Talleyrand, General de Beurnonville, Senator de Jaucourt, the Duke of Dalberg and Abbé de Montesquiou. For the time being this was sufficient. It already implied the downfall of the régime, for Abbé de Montesquiou had always been the representative of Louis XVIII in France and all his life the mortal enemy of the Revolution. Barante wrote that the old regicide conventionalists of the Senate ostensibly voted as they were asked. This detail, which was important, made a deep impression on the Tsar.

The provisional Government having — naturally — elected Talleyrand its President, proceeded to appoint the Ministers. Chief among them were Baylen's creature, General Dupont, now Napoleon's mortal enemy, who was given the War Office, and Comte Beugnot, ex-Prefect of the Empire, who was made Minister of the Interior, a man long since inured to serving any form of government with serene complaisance.

This really amounted to declaring, without as yet proclaiming it, that the imperial Government had fallen. But it was necessary to get from the Senate a formal statement to that effect. The General Council, which met in the Hôtel de Ville—represented, as a matter of fact, by only 14 out of 24 members—allowed itself to be prevailed upon by the lawyer Bellart to make a declaration "formally renouncing all obedience to Napoleon Bonaparte and expressing the most ardent desire for the restoration of monarchical Government in the person of Louis XVIII." The

**Declaration  
of the  
General  
Council.**

posting of this declaration on the walls of Paris, insisted on by the Council, was carried out that same night on instructions from Chabrol, whom Napoleon himself had made Prefect. Meanwhile at the Opera the foreign monarchs were being made the object of the most enthusiastic demonstrations, the details of which are nauseating. To the Royalist tune of *Vive Henri IV!*—prostituted for the occasion—Alexander was hailed as "King of Kings," together with the King of Prussia and "his valiant warriors."

On the following day, the 2nd of April, Caulaincourt, who had remained in Paris, made one last desperate effort with the Tsar, who, however, was cold as ice; the first essential, he declared,

## THE ALLIES IN PARIS

was for Napoleon to abdicate. The Duke of Vicenza fancied he added that "at a pinch" the King of Rome's cause might be considered—"if the Emperor was removed." He himself was requested to leave Paris, where, as Napoleon's plenipotentiary, his presence could no longer be tolerated.

**Caulaincourt  
Falls with  
the Tsar.**

The Senate, moreover, decided to take a further step along the path it had entered the previous day. As soon as it assembled at nine o'clock on the 2nd of April, 1814, it was presented by Lambrechts, who had hitherto been regarded as a "republican," with a motion in favour of the "fall," and without waiting for the grounds to be submitted, enthusiastically passed it. It was not until the following day, the 3rd of April, that Lambrechts formulated the grounds and had them agreed to. They were based on an accusation which came strangely from the lips of these men, for their main grievance against the Emperor was that "he had violated his oath by raising men and money contrary to the Constitutions." But it was precisely the Senate which, by its obsequious votes, had constantly aided and abetted this "violation," as well as the worst abuses of the imperial despotism. "A sign was an order for that Senate which always did more than it was asked," exclaimed Napoleon. Meanwhile, the recantations became ever more frequent and bitter. Fontanes, who had consistently flattered and fawned upon the Master, drew up the provisional Government's address to the country, releasing the soldiers from the duty of obeying a man "who was not even a Frenchman." Everybody was trying to out-Herod Herod in formulating repudiation.

Thus all the officials could regard themselves as having been set free. And yet there was still an imperial Government which, together with the Empress-Regent, had taken up its quarters at Blois. But nobody gave a thought to Blois. On the contrary, all eyes were turned, not without considerable anxiety, to Fontainebleau, where the storm might again burst forth.

\* \* \* \* \*

Napoleon had arrived there at half-past six on the morning of the 31st. He was by no means desperate. He was expecting the

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

army from Troyes to arrive in a few hours; with Marmont's and Mortier's corps, which had fallen back from Paris to the Corbell district, he would then have 60,000 men whom in less than three days' time he would be able to hurl against the Allies. On the 1st of April he summoned a council of war at which, in addition to Maret, Berthier and Lefebvre, Marshals Oudinot and Ney, who had just joined him, were also present. Although Macdonald was still on the way, Moncey, in whom he had the greatest confidence, had arrived from Paris. He placed two alternatives before them—either to make a lightning attack on Paris, which the Allies would have great difficulty in defending, or to go to the Loire and start a fresh campaign from there. They pronounced in favour of the Loire, a decision which the Emperor regarded as outrageous. Though he did not yet know what was happening or going to happen in Paris, he had a fairly shrewd presentiment, and he wished to put an immediate stop to all the intrigues by reinstalling himself in the capital *manu militari*. And he ordered Berthier to concentrate the army between Fontainebleau and Paris; at the first shot of the guns the people of Paris would certainly rise up! Oudinot, Ney and Moncey were by no means pleased with this decision. The Emperor did not fail to perceive this, and, anxious to find out what Marmont felt, he went to see him at Essones. He was extremely fond of the Duke of Ragusa, whom he regarded as not only "loyal" but "devoted"; it was entirely due to his personal affection for this companion of his stormy youth that this soldier, who was really quite a mediocrity, had been so successful. "Marmont owes his appointment to friendship," was the common verdict when, at the age of thirty-five, he had been given the Marshal's baton, and Napoleon fondly imagined that the benefits he had conferred upon him had made Marmont more attached than any of his other "followers."

**Napoleon  
at Fontaine-  
bleau.**

**Consultation  
with the  
Marshals.**

**Napoleon  
Visits  
Marmont.**

To avoid depressing him he did not even mention the capitulation of Paris; finding him a prey to thoughts some of which he would doubtless not have dared to confess, Napoleon tried to cheer him by talking to him affectionately, thanking him for having installed his troops at Essones, where they would cover Fontainebleau—

## THE ALLIES IN PARIS

a post of honour at which he congratulated himself on having a friend on whom he could rely.

The Emperor returned to Fontainebleau, where all his little army had now arrived, and gave his orders with a view to marching on Paris on the 4th of April. He spent the night of the 1st to the 2nd poring over his maps and on the morning of the 2nd seemed full of hope; whereupon Caulaincourt appeared, the invariable slayer of optimism.

**Caulaincourt  
at Fontaine-  
bleau.**

On being shown in he gave way to despair. Napoleon listened to his account of his mission, but did not seem perturbed by the bad news he brought; during part of the night he held forth on the situation with a philosophic calm which astounded his listener; but he concluded by saying that, in order to set everything right, he was resolved to fight.

On the morning of the 3rd he seemed to be more than ever determined, and yet he was well aware that all over the palace the Marshals were openly condemning the mad idea of going to Paris to fight the Allies. He declared that their recriminations

**Enthusiasm  
of the  
Veterans.**

were of no consequence; it was not to the Marshals that he was appealing but to his "*vieilles moustaches*." And at midday he held a review of his troops, stopping from time to time to chat with some grouser, and delighted with the eager and resolute replies he was given. Meanwhile, upstairs in the *Fer à Cheval*, the High Command were holding themselves aloof; their attitude was mistrustful, almost menacing. At last the Emperor took up his stand in the centre of the Guard, and calling out the officers and non-commissioned officers, he harangued them. But he was interrupted by shouts of, "To Paris! To Paris!" And he left them reassured by their ardent enthusiasm. On the stairs he met the gloomy group of Marshals. This time it was he who dragged them into his room to lecture them. Did they wish to have the Bourbons

**Napoleon  
Persuades  
the Marshals.**

back again, then? The very thought seemed to nauseate them. Ney, ever impetuous, burst into an angry tirade against "those Bourbons and their nobles" who would most certainly humiliate the great soldiers of the Revolution. Lefebvre supported him with scurrilous abuse. Thus Napoleon seemed to have won them over again. They retired, still extremely perplexed, however,



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

and on the following day he found they had once more turned against him.

These high officials, whom he had overwhelmed with favours, had no intention of seeing their own fortunes founder with his.

### **The Marshals Ready to Defect.**

Scarcely confessing their ignominious motives even to themselves, they all agreed that if they definitely prevented him from carrying out his project, using brute force, if necessary, and making him abdicate, they would be saving the country. There were five of them on the spot—Berthier, Ney, Moncey, Oudinot and Lefebvre; Macdonald was on his way. In varying degrees they were all, at heart, ready to desert him if not actually to rebel.

The Emperor saw them coming; after the interview of the 3rd, when he had succeeded in keeping them in hand, he had explained their case to Caulaincourt with cruel clarity. "They did not say anything," he added, "but I could see that they

### **Napoleon's Criticism of His Marshals.**

were inclining towards my abdication. They imagine it would mean merely changing one man. The fools do not see that the safety of France and of themselves depends on me; that what they are being offered is merely a bait; that my son can guarantee nothing and that it is treachery's method of losing the country." But, he continued, he would be able to drag them against Paris notwithstanding; "they would not dare to disobey him to his face or cover themselves with ignominy by deserting him at the moment of delivering battle."

He was mistaken. On the 4th, just after he had held another review, and with the soldiers' repeated shouts of "To Paris! To Paris!" still ringing in his ears, he was returning to his room with Maret, Caulaincourt and Berthier, when, without being invited, Ney, followed by Oudinot, Moncey and Lefebvre, forced themselves in on his heels. He turned round, looked at them, and at once knew the worst. In their angry faces he read the determination to have done. A dread hour was striking. He saw that the abscess had come to a head, and asked them what they wanted.

### **Scene with the Marshals.**

Ney, who that morning had been informed of the vote for the fall, demanded of him almost insolently whether he had heard the news from Paris. He replied by a vague wave of the hand. "Well, I have!"

## THE ALLIES IN PARIS

shouted the Marshal. The Senate had voted the fall. What was he going to do? Napoleon shrugged his shoulders. As far as he was concerned, the Senate's vote was null and void, both *de facto* and *de jure*. As for the Allies, he was going to Paris to crush them. There was a unanimous cry of expostulation. "It only remains for you to abdicate," was Ney's brief comment. A few days earlier the Emperor would have had the Prince of the Moskva arrested for this; but close beside him he saw his confidants, Maret, Caulaincourt, and Berthier, with bowed heads and melancholy faces, maintaining a sombre silence, while the Marshals, collected together in a little group, were glaring menacingly at him. He tried, as he had done on the previous day, to convince them, but they remained stubbornly deaf to all reason, with scowling faces and clenched jaws. Just then Macdonald entered. The Emperor knew him to be a noble upright man, incapable of treachery. But he, too, at once declared himself in favour of abdication. "We cannot expose Paris to the fate of Moscow," he explained. "We have made up our minds. We are determined to have done with it." But still Napoleon refused to give way. If the leaders deserted him, he declared, he was perfectly capable of taking his army into battle single-handed. "The army will not march!" retorted Ney. "The army will obey me!" exclaimed the Emperor furiously. Ney's eyes were starting out of his head. "The army will obey its leaders!" he shouted insolently.

At these words the Emperor quivered with rage. Had the windows of his room given on to the courtyard which was still full of soldiers, he would no doubt have flung them open and been met with an ovation which would have overpowered Ney; but at the moment he was literally closeted.

### **Napoleon's Rage.**

One of the most extraordinary traits of his character, usually so firm and resolute, was a tendency, when confronted by an excess of violence, to be filled with a sudden disgust which for the moment completely disarmed him. He would never have believed it possible for the vote of a servile Assembly to compass his downfall; but since his soldiers dared to speak to him as they had done he saw that such was indeed the case. "What do you wish me to do, gentlemen?" he asked in mournful tones. "Abdicate!" replied Oudinot and Ney in one breath. The Emperor felt a pang of

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

nausea; sick at heart he silently drew a piece of paper towards him and wrote on it the following simple lines: "Since the Allied

**Conditional** Powers have declared that the Emperor Napoleon  
**Abdication.** is the sole obstacle to peace in Europe, the Emperor

Napoleon, true to his oath, declares that he is ready to descend from the throne, to quit France and even life itself for the country's good, which is inseparable from the rights of his son, of the Regency and of the maintenance of the laws of the Empire.—Written in our Palace of Fontainebleau, this 4th day of April, 1814.—Napoleon." He held out the sheet to the Marshals, who were stupefied and almost confounded by their success. "I bow to your wishes," he said. "Now go to Paris and defend the rights of my son." Once again he chose Caulaincourt for this new mission, and even gave him Ney as an associate. The curses to which the Prince of the Moskva had given vent on the previous day at the mere mention of the Bourbons were still ringing in his ears. On reaching the advanced posts, they could pick up Marmont, who since he had arranged for the capitulation of Paris had, Napoleon observed, won the confidence of the Allies; "in any case I myself place implicit trust in him," he added.

The Marshals left the room almost embarrassed by their victory. In the general silence Lefebvre felt impelled to draw

**The Marshals** the moral; as he was a vulgar man of limited  
**Embarrassed.** intelligence he did so in extremely crude terms.

"Does he imagine that now we have titles, houses and lands we are going to get ourselves killed for him? It's his own fault; he took the packs off our backs too soon." The Duke of Danzig did not know that there are certain things a man should keep to himself—and even so!

Be this as it may, the Marshals had won the victory—a sorry victory. The abdication had been signed—an event of far greater significance than the vote for the fall passed by a debased and degraded Senate.

For SOURCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY, see the end of Chapter LII.

## CHAPTER LII

### THE ABDICATION

Macdonald sent to Paris with Caulaincourt and Ney. "He will be as loyal as the Duke of Ragusa would have been." Marmont has allowed himself to be won over and has promised to betray the Emperor. His embarrassment on the arrival of the plenipotentiaries. He joins them. First interview with the Tsar, who seems deeply moved. Defection of Marmont's corps. The Tsar, on being informed, insists on unconditional abdication. The "ragusade." Napoleon learns of Marmont's treachery. *Tu quoque fili!* He assembles the Marshals and, on their insisting, signs his unconditional abdication. "You want rest!" The plenipotentiaries sent back to Paris. The Senate recalls Louis XVIII on condition that he accepts the Constitution voted by them. Vitrolles goes to fetch the Comte d'Artois. The "constitution of unearned incomes." The difficulty of negotiating the treaty handing over the Isle of Elba to the Emperor. It is signed and Caulaincourt brings it to Napoleon. He is deserted by all; his bitter thoughts. He tries to poison himself, but does not succeed, and prepares to take his departure. The farewells at Fontainebleau. The journey into exile; regrettable incidents at Orgon; the embarkation at Fréjus. The 17th Vendemiaire of the year VIII and the 28th of April, 1814. Fifteen years.

**T**HE abdication, however, was only conditional; it was necessary to obtain the consent of the Allies to its main provision—the accession of Napoleon II. Caulaincourt, Ney and Marmont were entrusted with the task; but while the

**Napoleon  
Sends Plenipotentiar-  
ies to Paris.**

first two were making preparations to go, the Emperor arranged to send Macdonald with them to take the place of the Duke of Ragusa. There was nobody, he explained to Caulaincourt, in whom he had greater confidence than Marmont, but for this very reason he thought it better to leave him at his post, to cover Fontainebleau with his army corps. Macdonald, who was loyal and possibly a greater soldier than Marmont, and, moreover, had not committed himself in any way, would obtain a better hearing from the Allies when he acted as spokesman for the Army. "He will be quite as faithful to me," added Napoleon, "as the Duke of Ragusa would have been!"

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"As faithful as the Duke of Ragusa would have been!" At that very moment that same Duke of Ragusa was engaged in betraying his master, his benefactor and friend.

"You send me letters from Marmont which tell me nothing," the Emperor had written to Clarke a month previously. "The inordinate vanity of that Marshal can be read in every line of them." For some days past this "inordinate vanity" had been inflated to the point of insanity. The acclamations with which he had been greeted in his house on the evening of the 31st of March were still ringing in his ears. True, during that hectic night he had repulsed Talleyrand's tempting overtures and refused the important political rôle offered to him; but he had found it extremely difficult to place himself under the Master's orders again on the following day. The "inordinate vanity" which Napoleon had noticed, had invaded his whole being and entirely unbalanced him. And he even regretted having remained loyal three days previously.

His vanity was just as apparent to those who knew him well as it was to Napoleon; and in Paris it was hoped this weakness might prove the means of securing him. On the 2nd of April he had received at Essones an emissary from the provisional Government, one of his own old aides-de-camp, a certain Montessuy, who had become an ardent Royalist. After informing him that the fall had been voted, he gave him various letters from friends, urgently beseeching him to "join the standard of the good cause." More important still, Schwarzenberg had also confided a letter to Montessuy, inviting Marmont, in the most flattering terms, to abandon his post and bring his corps over to the enemy lines. At this invitation, most insulting to a man of honour, he had shown no sign of indignation; and yet they were asking him not only to betray the Emperor, but to damn him completely; for to uncover Fontainebleau meant delivering Napoleon into the hands of his enemies and literally plunging a dagger into the breast of the man who had more than once declared, "Marmont is a son to me!"

Not only did he not hesitate, but such was his disloyalty that,

## THE ABDICATION

incredible as it may seem, it was not to the provisional Government but to the enemy's own Generalissimo that **Marmont's Treachery.** this soldier of France wrote formally declaring himself "ready to leave Napoleon's army and bring his men with him."

In order to set his troops on the march, Marmont was obliged to communicate his intentions to one or two of his higher subordinates. He still pretended "merely to be consulting them under the seal of secrecy." Some of them expressed indignation, but others, more particularly Souham, who was in command of one of the divisions, seemed merely surprised.

Everything was ready for the march to begin when suddenly the Emperor's three plenipotentiaries arrived at Essones. They communicated their mission and explained the Emperor's reasons for having wished Marmont himself to be associated with it. This fresh proof of confidence and affection embarrassed him. Moreover, since the Emperor was abdicating, his defection had almost ceased to have much interest for those who had demanded it; it would merely be contemptible. Betrayed by a chance word let drop in the presence of the Emperor's plenipotentiaries by Bordesoule, one of his subordinates, he was obliged to confess the truth. They showed their consternation, but he immediately reassured them, declaring that he could still abandon the path into which he had for a moment imprudently strayed. They offered to take him with them; he could explain to Schwarzenberg on the way why he had changed his mind. He hesitated and then consented. As a matter of fact, he was afraid that his intention, which he had already confided to the six Generals, might be bruited abroad and bring down the Emperor's wrath on his head. Moreover, there are signs to show that he had not really changed his mind; it was not long before Caulaincourt began to wonder whether the wretch had not deceived the plenipotentiaries by pretending to have abandoned his treacherous designs.

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On reaching Paris, the plenipotentiaries begged audience of the Tsar. Although at the news of their arrival Talleyrand and his

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

friends had presented themselves in a body to urge the Tsar to remain true to his promises, the latter seemed shaken for a moment during the course of the interview. Since Ney and Macdonald assured him that the whole Army, from the rank and file to the high command, was whole-heartedly attached to the imperial régime and "could only view with consternation the restoration of a Monarchy which had played no part in the glory it had won," Alexander seemed unable to reach a decision. He no longer absolutely refused to consider the claims of the King of Rome, but merely adjourned the meeting, on the plea that he wished to consult his Allies. He would receive Napoleon's plenipotentiaries again on the following day at twelve o'clock. They arranged to meet at eleven o'clock in Ney's house, where they discussed matters over lunch. They were just leaving the table when Colonel Fabvier, Marmont's Chief of Staff, arrived in a state of terrible agitation from Essones. He was the bearer of news which filled all concerned with consternation. The Generals of the Duke of Ragusa's corps were marching their troops over to the enemy lines! Marmont seemed to be completely taken aback. But was he really?

During his brief absence he had handed over the command of his corps to Souham, but hardly had he turned his back than orders arrived for him to go to Fontainebleau. The Emperor wished to collect his corps commanders together and explain his eventual plan of battle to them. Souham immediately jumped to the conclusion that Napoleon had got wind of the Duke of Ragusa's machinations with the enemy, and that his sole reason for sending for him was to put the fear of God into him. Terrified of meeting with a similar reception if he obeyed the Emperor's summons, he was panic-stricken; he saw only one way of escaping the consequences of the plan having been abandoned, and that was to hasten its execution. At his orders, and in spite of Fabvier's protests, Marmont's corps had been mobilised in the middle of the night and must by then have reached the enemy lines.

The plenipotentiaries, who, on the previous day, had cherished some hope of success, now despaired of it if the news had reached the ears of the Tsar. Alexander, however, was still in ignorance of it, and, urged by Ney and Macdonald, seemed inclined at least

## THE ABDICATION

to consider the hypothesis of the Regency, when a Russian officer entered and informed him of what had happened at Essones. This, the Tsar declared, solved all his difficulties; the plenipotentiaries had professed to be speaking in the name of the Army, and now, lo and behold! a whole corps of that Army, together with its Generals, had "declared for the Bourbons."

### **The Tsar Demands Unconditional Abdication.**

Thus there was no need for the Allies to hesitate any longer. If Napoleon abdicated unconditionally he could rely on being well treated. And he mentioned the Isle of Elba and a handsome allowance. The plenipotentiaries were obliged to return to Fontainebleau with this message. They left the room in despair; the defection of Marmont's corps had dealt the knock-out blow to the Empire.

As for the Duke of Ragusa, he had not dared to accompany his comrades to the Tsar, but had promised to hasten to Versailles, whither Souham was leading his troops, and persuade them to go back. But hearing at Versailles that his men, on discovering the treachery of their leaders, had rebelled, far from allowing them to go back, he actually intervened to prevent them from returning to their posts at Essones. Having succeeded in appeasing them, he came back to Paris and informed Talleyrand of his "success," on which he was heartily congratulated

### **The "Ragusade."**

by everybody. He was destined one day to pay dearly for this; the very people whom his treachery had served openly expressed the contempt they had long secretly felt for him.\*

It was some time before the Emperor heard of what had taken place. As he had not much faith in the success of the mission he had entrusted to his plenipotentiaries, he was still making arrangements to fight when the news of the Essones catastrophe suddenly reached his ears. At last the agreement made between Schwarzenberg and Marmont on the 3rd of April was revealed to him in all its details. He blanched, as Julius Cæsar must have blanched when, among the assassins who were falling

### **Napoleon Learns of Marmont's Treachery.**

\* When, on the 3rd of July, 1830, the Duke of Ragusa went to Saint-Cloud to inform Charles X that, in spite of his efforts, the Paris mob was master of the capital, the Duc d'Angoulême exclaimed in exasperation: "Don't you see, father! He has betrayed us just as he did the other fellow!"



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

upon him, the Roman Dictator recognised Brutus, his favourite. "*Tu quoque fili!*"—"You too, my son!" he cried, veiling his outraged features in his toga. "Wretch!" exclaimed Napoleon. For the moment he could find no other word. "I thought he was an honourable man!" he remarked to Caulaincourt a few hours later. As a matter of fact, he was hurt rather than indignant. "He was a son to me!" he declared; but now he could only regard him as a parricide from whose crime he might, like Cæsar, have veiled his face.

"But it is not worth while letting it prey on one's mind," he might have added, with Corneille; and he raised his head again.

**Napoleon**                     He had very little hope left; but from the flagrant  
**Almost**                     treachery of a leader, whom he had overwhelmed  
**Hopeless.**                 with favours, he appealed to the loyalty of his  
brave men. In a magnificent order for the day he bound those who had stabbed him to the pillory. But as it was now clear to him that his position in Fontainebleau was untenable and the attack on Paris, in any case, impossible, he was on the point of organising the retreat of his little army to the Loire when the plenipotentiaries returned. They described their fruitless efforts and insisted on the Emperor making the sacrifice demanded of him. He asked for time to think it over. During the night of the 5th to the 6th he summoned Caulaincourt to his room and to the stupefaction of the Duke of Vicenza, discussed the events that had occurred with almost terrifying serenity. It was perfectly clear to him that there would now be a general rush to betray him. "Marmont has turned their heads," he declared. "No doubt they would be ashamed to imitate him; but they are even more afraid of not rising to fortune as quickly as he does."

And, indeed, a veritable conspiracy "to have done with it" was being hatched between the leaders, the echoes of which reached Napoleon's ears. Anxious to know exactly how he stood, he again summoned the Marshals to him and once more submitted to them various plans of campaign he had thought out. They might have been deaf and dumb. Then sweeping them with a gaze that pierced to the very souls of these men whose eyes could not meet his, he exclaimed: "You want a rest, gentlemen. Very well! You shall have it." Thus did he fling back their own thoughts into

## THE ABDICATION

their faces. And sitting down he drew a little table towards him, and on a sheet of paper he found on it, wrote the abdication they were all so anxious to secure, "renouncing the throne of France and of Italy both for himself and his children," because "there was no sacrifice, even that of life itself, that he was not ready to make in the interests of France." The pen ate into the paper; his signature tore it.

A few moments later he had recovered his serenity and, dismissing the others, continued to converse with Caulaincourt. The Bourbons, he declared, would never be able to shake themselves free of their "periwigged heads."—"At the end of a year people will be fed to the teeth with them!" Already, in the dim distance, he could see his revenge.

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On the 7th of April he sent back his plenipotentiaries to present the Allied Sovereigns with the abdication that had been wrested from him. They found Paris a hotbed of slander; everybody was slinging mud at the vanquished lion; they vilified him to their heart's content. And since the noble Chateaubriand had set the tone, by the publication of a pamphlet that is still famous, why should not those of baser metal have given themselves this satisfaction? But since nothing had been destroyed that had not been replaced, it had at last become necessary to restore the

**Louis XVIII  
Recalled.**

Bourbons. On the 6th the Senate "sent a free invitation to Louis Stanislas Xavier to ascend the throne"—provided he accepted the Constitution, which the Assembly reserved itself the right of dictating to him, and in which, as we shall see, the Senators provided first and foremost for themselves. If the Bourbons accepted these conditions, Louis would be proclaimed "King of the French." It was a bargain—a matter of give and take.

Some of the Royalists were up in arms against the impudence of this attitude; these Senators, certain of whom were "the murderers of Louis XVI," were actually trying to lay down the law to "the King of France." And there was a possibility of a struggle ensuing which would spoil the manœuvre which Talleyrand had been directing for the last fortnight. He, too, was

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anxious not to see the Bourbons return unless they bowed their heads beneath the Caudine Forks, and was encouraging the Senators in their most extortionate demands; and yet through Vitrolles he had informed the Comte d'Artois that it was urgent for him to come to Paris at all costs. Who could tell? In his eagerness to become Lieutenant-General, might not a frivolous scatter-brain like the Comte d'Artois consent to submit to the

**Vitrolles  
Fetches the  
Comte  
d'Artois.**

Senate's ruling? Vitrolles went to fetch the Prince, and meanwhile the Senate put the finishing touches to *its* Constitution. Its main object was to safeguard against reaction, not only the principles and the men of the Revolution, but also

most of the institutions of the Consulate and the Empire, together with their beneficiaries. Thus while the Act certainly protected many interests, more especially the rights of the new owners of public land, its chief merit, as far as the Senators were concerned, lay in the fact that it safeguarded their own. While instituting two Chambers, the Chamber of Deputies and the Chamber of Peers, the senatorial Constitution accorded to the Nation—as a matter of fact, a *legal* country reduced to a minimum—the privilege of electing the deputies, but merely transformed the old imperial Senate *in toto* into a Chamber of Peers, by bestowing upon it the privilege of heredity which Napoleon had always refused. Nay more, the endowments granted by the Emperor were to be capitalised to form a considerable sum, the revenues of which were to be divided among the Senators in perpetuity. As a matter of fact, this last clause killed the whole scheme. Public opinion, ever hostile to these “perpetuals,” rose up in

**A Constitu-  
tion of  
“Unearned  
Incomes.”**

revolt against this impudent pretension. “A Constitution! Yes, indeed! A Constitution of unearned incomes!” was the general verdict. And the public indignation eventually enabled the Bourbons to put this clause of the statute into

the waste-paper basket. But the Senate was still hoping to secure it in its entirety when, on the 6th of April, 1814, it, including the regicides, proclaimed Louis Stanislas Xavier King of the French—in return for payment received.

As a matter of fact, in the end the Royalist agents more or less pledged themselves on behalf of the Princes, for the most impor-

## THE ABDICATION

tant consideration was the restoration of the Bourbon throne; and they were proved right, for adherents immediately poured in, even from the most unexpected quarters, while a furious campaign was inaugurated against the fallen Emperor.

Already the "advantages" which the Tsar had promised Caulaincourt would be accorded him were being disputed. When, on the 5th of April, in the name of the Allies, Alexander had demanded Napoleon's unconditional abdication, he had promised him the Isle of Elba with sovereign rights and an annual allowance of two millions, payable by the King of France; but so great was the reaction

### **Disputes over Napoleon's Compensation.**

against "Bonaparte" and everything connected with him, that from the provisional Government to the Allied Ministers, everybody was meanly

disputing this meagre compensation. The Tsar, true to his word, was resisting his Allies, declaring that he was in honour bound, but he was obliged to engage in endless discussions and disputes to drag the concessions out of them, with Caulaincourt, filled with anxiety, urging him to insist. Who could tell? If Napoleon were driven to despair, might he not make one last supreme effort? Eventually, on the 11th, the Allies signed the convention which, after Napoleon had appended his signature, was known as the "Treaty" of Fontainebleau, and on the 12th

### **Treaty of Fontaine- bleau.**

Caulaincourt at last secured the document. Macdonald, who had helped him in the negotiations, returned to Fontainebleau with him, but Ney excused himself. He had just sent in his

adhesion to the Bourbons and considered himself released from his allegiance to Napoleon.

\* \* \* \* \*

Since the 6th of April defections from the fallen Monarch had been occurring thick and fast; moreover, none of those he was expecting to come to him had put in an appearance. Marie Louise was at Blois with the Ministers. To her credit be it said that she had expressed the desire to go to Fontainebleau with her son, but those about her had prevented her, telling her she must await permission from her venerable father, who was coming

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

to visit her. As for "the Family"—the famous Family—they called themselves to the memory of their fallen brother only by last desperate demands for money. **Napoleon Deserted by All.** The Emperor at least expected to see his Ministers present themselves; he felt it would be "correct" for them all, from Cambacérès to Molé, to come and take their leave of him. But nobody came, not even Savary. On the contrary, on the 12th Berthier, the great captain's right hand, forsook him, after having, incredible as it may seem, announced his adherence to the Bourbons in a letter quite unjustifiably written "in the name of the Army." The Emperor was cut to the quick. After Marmont, there was nobody on whom he had conferred so many favours as Berthier.

On their return Caulaincourt and Macdonald found the Emperor utterly dejected. When they presented him with the treaty making him King of the Isle of Elba—the isle of Sancho Pancho bestowed upon Julius Cæsar, as Henry Houssaye puts it—he shrugged his shoulders and thrust the document carelessly into his pocket. Would he ever see that famous Isle of Elba? He was convinced that, gradually abandoned by everybody and exposed, defenceless, to the most dastardly machinations, he would be assassinated in some dark passage. **Napoleon's Despair.** And his suspicions were justified; for we know to-day that his assassination, cold-bloodedly regarded by many as the best solution, was being broached in Paris in Talleyrand's immediate circle. Moreover, Napoleon had heard that at Blois an envoy of the provisional Government had laid hands upon his funds and had even rifled the Empress's jewels. "Dudon has stolen my purse," he exclaimed. Yes, they were robbing him before murdering him. He was sick at heart; and he wandered sighing from one room to the other. One day, as Fontainebleau, among many other events, reminded him of Pius VII's two visits, he remarked: "The Pope! Yes! Quite true! He was badly treated." His regret was tinged with remorse. On the evening of the 12th, in Caulaincourt's presence, he held a merciless review, so to speak, of all the acts of desertion, cowardice and treachery of which he had been the victim. "My life is unbearable!" he concluded. Like Danton, when he was deserted by all, he might have exclaimed: "I am sick to death of my fellow-men."

## THE ABDICATION

During the following night he tried to poison himself, but three hours after he had taken the drug he was sick and brought it all up. "God did not wish it," he said, closing his eyes. On the 13th the love of life seemed to have returned to him—as though his well-nigh miraculous recovery were a sign that the Almighty still had great things in store for him—and he signed the paper Caulaincourt brought him almost eagerly. He cordially embraced Macdonald, who had had the decency to come and bid him farewell, and presented him with the sword he had used at the Pyramids. As the desertions continued and his servants were slipping away like the rest, even his valet Constant and the Mameluck Roustan, he was now longing to be allowed to leave the palace and its sinister desolation and go to the Isle of Elba.

But it was necessary to await the arrival of the foreign commissioners who were to convey him. At last they arrived; whereupon, on the 20th of April, he had the Guard assembled in the court of the Cheval Blanc and bade them farewell in a scene that will remain memorable for all time. Every detail combined to make it profoundly moving. Going to the centre of the court he spoke the words that have lived through the years—words of heartfelt gratitude to these old soldiers whom he called "his children," words whose simple homely eloquence flowed straight from his heart and which, on this occasion, were not marred by any desire to play a part.

"Soldiers," he said, "my old companions in arms whom I have always found on the path of honour, at last the time has come for us to part. I might have remained longer with you, but it would have meant prolonging a cruel struggle, and perhaps have added civil war to war abroad; I could not face lacerating the bosom of France any longer. Enjoy the rest you have so well deserved, and be happy. As for me, do not pity me. I should like to clasp you all in my arms, but let me embrace the flag that represents you."

**Napoleon's  
Farewell to  
his Men.**

And he embraced General Petit, the silk flag, and the golden eagle, while his veterans, so all declare, sobbed aloud. On the previous day Commissioner Neil Campbell had been disappointed when he saw this "little man" with his "ill-kempt beard"; but at

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

this supreme hour he was forced to acknowledge that the "little man" once again seemed a giant.

When the farewells were over, with the weeping soldiers lining the path on either side of him, he walked with a firm step to his carriage, and a moment later he was driving, escorted by the foreign commissioners, towards his new destination. The journey held more than one shock in store for him. At Avignon he met Augereau, and, unaware that he had just insulted him most shamefully in a proclamation, he flung his arms round his neck and hugged him. The foreign commissioners, scandalised by this Judas's kiss, enlightened him; he was furious. In the south he was exposed to all manner of insults; it was even worse at Orgon, between Tarascon and Arles, where he was almost torn to bits by a surging mob and, in order to escape an ignominious death, was obliged to put on the helmet and cloak of the Austrian commissioner. This dastardly riot shook him to the depths—"with fright," it has been said time and again, but, as Frédéric Masson very rightly observes, his feeling was more one of "horror."

On the 28th of April he reached Fréjus, where the English ship, *The Undaunted*, was awaiting him. He was received on board to a salute of twenty-one guns, and this act of homage on the part of the English pleased him. Moreover, he had entirely recovered his serenity. Before embarking he wrote to Doctor Corvisart—it was the last letter he wrote in France: "Do not give way to melancholy thoughts." A few hours later he saw the beach of Saint-Raphael fade away in the distance.

It was on this same beach that, on the 17th Vendémiaire of the year VIII (the 9th of October 1799), young General Bonaparte, who had miraculously returned from Egypt, had landed from the *Muiron* and rushed to Paris to found the most marvellous fortune. Less than fifteen years had passed between the two events.

**SOURCES** (for Chapters LI and LII). *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XXVII). Lecestre, *Lettres inédites* (II). Memoirs and Reminiscences by Pontécoulant (III), Caulaincourt, Cornet, Plancy, Marmont, and Macdonald.

**WORKS.** Those already mentioned by H. Houssaye (1814), Masson (IX and X), Sorel (VIII), Morvan (Soldat, II), Stiegler (*Oudinot*), Weil (*Campagne de 1814*), Lacour-Gayet (*Talleyrand*), and Cassagne (*Chateaubriand*).

## CHAPTER LIII

### THE BOURBONS AND THE COUNTRY

The Comte d'Artois in Paris. "Fifty follies." The Convention of the 23rd of April, 1814; the first serious mistake. The King's arrival. Louis XVIII. The lack of a Government. Anarchy in the provinces. The necessary reduction of the Army. The calamitous Treaty of Paris; humiliation of the country. The Charter "granted." "Everything that had been decided has been thrown into the melting-pot again." Momentary disappearance of hostile parties. The attitude of the provincial nobility and clergy; the "new holders of public land" menaced. In Paris the bourgeoisie becomes embittered; the myth of "government by the priest-ridden." The disbanding of the Army gives rise to the other myth of "government by the foreigner." The rank and file of the Army exasperated by the creation of a Household Corps; Dupont appoints *émigrés* and Chouans to the superior ranks; fury of the officers on half-pay. The Government out of touch with the country; the patriots wounded. The bourgeoisie relies on the Chambers. The latter oppose the Counter-Revolution. Ferrand's statement—the "bee-line." The King irritated by the vote of censure on Ferrand. Soult charged with the task of completing the "purging" of the Army. Louis XVIII prorogues the Chambers; the Government isolated in the midst of an embittered country.

ON the 12th of April, 1814, the Comte d'Artois, who had proclaimed himself "Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom," had entered Paris. He was an amiable creature, still charming at the age of fifty-seven and anxious to please.

**The Comte  
d'Artois  
in Paris.**

After having led a gay and giddy existence he had turned extremely pious, though he was still a frivolous-minded shallow-pate. He had made his way to Paris, scattering the most unwise promises right and left—the abolition of conscription, the suppression of the *droits réunis*, etc.; finally, in order to be allowed to enter the capital, he had pretended to accept, in its main essentials, the famous Constitution which the Senate was determined to impose upon the King. He had driven through the city all smiles and affability, and had installed himself in the Tuileries escorted by the Marshals, whom he overwhelmed with compliments and flattery.



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

For a fortnight he had played the King without giving a thought to his brother, the real Sovereign. On meeting with support from the most unexpected quarters, he had, moreover, jumped to the conclusion that the whole of France was acclaiming the restoration of the Bourbon Throne. But the country had merely let the Bourbons come back; it had not displayed the slightest enthusiasm, and was somewhat mistrustfully waiting to see what they would do. The royal commissioners despatched to the provinces—most of them were repatriated *émigrés*, so behind the times that they did not even know the names of the departments—found everything in an appalling state of confusion. The promises lavished by the Comte d'Artois having been circulated far and wide, the masses imagined there would be no more taxes levied and refused to pay them. The 1815 class, followed by thousands of comrades, had, for the same reason, left the barracks in a body without regular leave. This meant anarchy. Moreover, economic life was at sixes and sevens owing to the sudden rupture of the Blockade, and the manufacturers, overwhelmed by the dumping of English goods, were dismissing their hands. The measures taken by the Tuileries merely aggravated the situation. Vitrolles, who had become the Lieutenant-General's intimate adviser, felt far from easy: "Such is our popularity with the public that **"Fifty Follies."** we may commit twenty-five follies a day," he said. "But we must avoid committing fifty." All the same they did commit fifty. Even the friends of the Comte d'Artois himself were perturbed and anxious to put an end to the fantastic dictatorship of that frivolous Prince. "Send for the King!" one of them advised him. "Tell him to come as quickly as possible!" But before the King arrived a supreme folly was committed which was destined seriously to compromise the fate of the French frontiers.

Hostilities had been suspended by means of a series of armistices, and, in theory, the war was over. But France still held 53 strongholds outside her ancient boundaries, precious stakes for the day when the treaty came to be discussed.

**Convention  
of the 23rd of  
April, 1814.**

But, by the convention of the 23rd of April, 1814, signed just the day before Louis XVIII landed, Talleyrand handed them all over to the enemy; true, the latter undertook to evacuate "French" territory in

## BOURBONS AND THE COUNTRY

exchange. The return of Danzig and Hamburg merely meant losing a stake, but to give back Mayence and Antwerp amounted to prejudicing the treaty itself and revealing the fact that the French Government would not even demand the retention of the natural boundaries. This was the mistake, an extremely serious mistake. Talleyrand—I shall return to this—made it, as a matter of fact, with his eyes open, and the Comte d'Artois, having but little interest in the conquests of 1792, endorsed it light-heartedly. Moreover, the enemy did not evacuate a single inch of territory.

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The King landed on the 24th of April, 1814, at Calais. He was a very different man from his brother; a sceptic in more

**Louis XVIII  
Lands.**

ways than one, but conscious of his mission as King of France, he believed more firmly in divine right than in God Himself, and had given proof of that fine form of courage which consists in being dignified in adversity. He was, moreover, shrewd and intelligent. This portly old gentleman, who, crippled with gout, had the greatest difficulty in walking, would have been quite capable of avoiding mistakes and would no doubt have steered clear of some of those committed in 1814, if he had kept a sharper eye and a firmer hand on those who inveigled him into them. But though a man of fine intellect and a philosopher, he was indolent and, content to make his "dignity" the excuse, he would hover above the region of mundane affairs, merely criticising with biting sarcasm the clumsy Minister who had landed him in a predicament.

From Calais to Compiègne he was welcomed with enthusiastic demonstrations of affection which confirmed him in the belief

**Louis XVIII  
Welcomed.**

that he was *Le Désiré*, as he was repeatedly assured, instead of being merely *L'Inconnu*, of whom too much was expected. Since he was *Le Désiré*, he concluded that there was no obligation whatever for him to pass under the Senate's Caudine Forks and that he was free to do as he pleased. At Compiègne he was received by the Marshals, to whom he gave a gracious welcome, quite mistakenly imagining that this was enough to win the Army over to him. And he

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

"deigned" to give audience to Talleyrand, who, being a man of tact, smoothed over the awkwardness of the situation. But the personage whose arrival he regarded with anything but pleasure was the Tsar Alexander, who intended to read him a lecture. He thought it absurd of this Russian autocrat, by reason of services rendered of which he made far too much, to expect him to submit to the Constitution drawn up by "regicides," and he sent him away—an act which was not devoid of serious consequences. Having by this time reached Saint-Ouen, he inscribed with his own royal hand, from which a grand style naturally flowed, a declaration in which he professed his readiness to consider the bases of the Constitution which, however, would have to be revised by himself.

He entered Paris on the 4th of May, 1814, amid acclamations far less enthusiastic than those with which the amiable Artois had been greeted. Chateaubriand has given a famous description of the sullen fury displayed by the imperial Guard who were forced to do the honours to this old Bourbon. Frénilly, too, as well as "René," noticed their "terrible" faces. Nevertheless, the King entered the Tuileries well satisfied. "The worst is over," he observed. He was mistaken. For to install himself was much less difficult than to found a dynasty.

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To begin with, he did not know how to found a Government. All he had was Ministers—Talleyrand, Baron Louis, Abbé de Montesquiou, Beugnot, Ferrand, Dambray, Malouet, and General Dupont; but there was no Ministry. Precisely because he had his head in the clouds, Louis XVIII, more than any other monarch, should have chosen a Prime Minister. But he would have been bound to choose Talleyrand, whom, in his heart of hearts, he detested. Thus there was no bond of union between the Ministers and, since they held the utmost diversity of views and were occasionally diametrically opposed to one another, they never succeeded in harmonising their measures—it was a case of a concert without a conductor.

## BOURBONS AND THE COUNTRY

As this meant anarchy above, what hope was there of anything better below? The payment of taxes continued to be refused, above all in the provinces, which, having "fought for the King" during the Revolution, maintained that they were now privileged. But Baron Louis, the conscientious Minister of Finance, refused to recognise these pretensions and continued to levy even that most unpopular tax, the *droits réunis*, with even greater severity than before; whereupon the people complained that the promises made by the Comte d'Artois were being broken. It had not been worth while consenting to the downfall of the other fellow!

### **Refusal to Pay Taxes.**

Baron Louis also brought forward the question of the Army, which constituted a crushing burden, and one, moreover, no longer required. On the return of the prisoners, it would consist of 400,000 rank and file and 40,000 officers; it was reasonable and even necessary to reduce it to a quarter of that number. But it was a ticklish matter. To disband and send back to their homes 300,000 men, most of them with a grievance, was serious enough, but the case of the officers was a thorny problem of a different nature. Nearly 18,000 would have to be retired on half-pay. And, even more loudly than the rank and file, would they denounce the scandal and interpret a measure which belonged to the realm of finance as an indication of the hostility felt by the Royalist Government for "the brave men" who had shed their blood for the country and covered it with glory. Thus the myth arose that the Bourbons were disarming France in order to pay their debts to the foreigners who had restored them.

### **Reduction of the Army.**

The treaty signed in Paris merely served to gain credence for this myth. The country wished for peace, but still cherished the absurd illusion that, since Napoleon had been sacrificed, the terms imposed would not be mortifying. Had not the Allies proclaimed, time and again, that "they were not making war on France"? In April, 1814, certain foreign representatives had even vaguely promised Talleyrand himself that the reduction of France to the boundaries of 1791 would not be too strictly enforced. Talleyrand was not particularly anxious to retain the natural boundaries, and Louis XVIII cared even less, though he wished to secure a rounding-off

### **The Treaty of Paris.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

of territory which would strengthen the country's ill-omened north-east frontier, which was so vulnerable and far too close to Paris. The Allies refused, and even went so far as to argue that in leaving to France the Comtat-Venaissin they had already consented to an important rounding-off of territory. But with some difficulty they were prevailed upon to allow her to keep one or two towns that had not belonged to her in 1791—Philippeville and Marienburg. Moreover, a large part of Savoy was also left in her possession; but as the King of Sardinia was Louis XVIII's brother-in-law, it was precisely this territory that the King would have liked to give back. And this was all that remained to France of the conquests of the Revolution and the Empire! Furthermore, England, on being asked to return the French colonies, retained one of which France was particularly fond, the *Île de France*, which, after the irrevocable loss of San Domingo, constituted one of her finest overseas possessions. To crown all, Talleyrand,

### **Talleyrand's Concessions.**

who had thought fit to specify in the treaty certain proposed modifications in the map of Europe, before they had been discussed at the Congress, was committed to having sanctioned in advance the handing over of Belgium to Holland, the establishment of a German power on the left bank of the Rhine, the reinstallation of Austria in northern Italy and the strengthening of the Kingdom of Sardinia by the union with it of the old Republic of Genoa—all clauses calculated to shut France in even more securely than she had been in 1791.

### **The Peace of Paris.**

And yet, after signing this Treaty of Paris on the 30th of May, 1814, Talleyrand wrote that same evening saying: "My peace is settled. It is extremely good . . . and on the whole noble."

But the country did not think the peace either "good" or "noble." It was still proud of the glory won and the conquests made by the "Great Nation." Since everything, or nearly everything, was being given back, once again the sacrifice of the Emperor did not seem worth while. The Royalist Government should at least have made the people feel that it shared their grief; but, since they had left France in 1791, the Princes and their friends were clearly the only Frenchmen unable to sympathise with this blow to the nation's pride.

## BOURBONS AND THE COUNTRY

Though the peace was not popular, however, temporary satisfaction was afforded by the Charter.

The Charter was nothing more or less than the famous senatorial Constitution remodelled by the King and his confidential adviser, Abbé de Montesquiou. Louis, whose sojourn in England had imbued him with a certain respect for parliamentarism, raised no difficulties about bestowing a similar system on France, who

### **The Charter Granted.**

was now to experience all the joys of a bicameral Government, with a Chamber of hereditary Peers and a Chamber of Deputies elected by the vote of the bourgeoisie. The masses took but little interest, though they were pleased to see that, together with most of the conquests made in 1789, possession of the public lands and the majority of the institutions of the Consulate and the Empire, from the Code to the Legion of Honour, with the sole exception of the Concordat, were solemnly guaranteed. The King, however, constantly preoccupied with the problem of safeguarding the royal prerogative, did not wish this felicitous creation to be given the name of Constitution, which to his mind reeked of the Revolution; reviving an ancient mediæval term, he insisted that it should be called a "Charter granted" by him, and, as irrefutable proof that he had been the legitimate King since 1795, dated the "nineteenth year of his reign." He was bitterly reproached for this. They were trifling details, but since they gave rise to ill-feeling, he made a mistake in not sacrificing them. A Charter that had been "granted" might, it was objected, be "withdrawn," and since Louis was childless it was feared that the heir to the throne, the Comte d'Artois, might one day think fit to take this step.

In order to avoid holding elections, the imperial Legislative Body was temporarily retained at the Palais-Bourbon; it had

### **The Chamber of Peers.**

been so prolific in its recantations during the last two months that it certainly deserved this reward. The Chamber of Peers was created from the remnants of a "purged" Senate, 55 Senators, more particularly "regicides," being excluded, while its numbers were swelled by a few Marshals and some forty "great nobles" of the *Ancien Régime*.

It was before these two Chambers, assembled in the Palais-Bourbon, that the King presented himself on the 4th of June, 1814, to read the Charter. His opening speech, which was clever

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

and eloquent, was enthusiastically applauded, and if ever there was a time when the Throne of the Bourbons might have been regarded as definitely restored, it was the evening of that 4th of June.

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Unfortunately the King talked well but did little, while he was surrounded by Ministers whose restless activities had neither rhyme nor reason. Not so very long ago, Fontanes, defending the Emperor for having "usurped" the throne of the Bourbons, wrote: "He has merely dethroned anarchy." But, strange to say, with the restoration of Louis XIV's grandsons, anarchy was also re-enthroned. If the First Consul succeeded in "dethroning anarchy," it was, as we know, by acting as arbitrator between the various parties, and making his government a series of concordats between the Past and the Present, a system which should have been preserved and even extended in 1814. But instead of pursuing this obvious and necessary course, precisely the opposite was done. "They have put everything that had been settled back into the melting-pot," observed Napoleon when he came back.

The hostile parties seemed to be stupefied. The few servants of the Empire who had remained true to it hid their heads. The old revolutionaries, frightened out of their lives, did not stir. Fouché offered himself to the Princes. The constitutionalists, who for a moment had appeared perturbed, regarded the Charter as the Promised Land. The Liberal bourgeoisie was all for the King. The only quarter from which trouble could be expected was from his own most ardent supporters; and Louis XVIII, who knew his Voltaire better than most Frenchmen, doubtless more than once murmured the famous prayer: "Save me from my friends!"

The nobility, who under the Empire had been more or less resigned to the loss of their property, now loudly reclaimed it and, in certain districts of the west and the south, were supported by a whole powerful party. But the Charter had confirmed "the irrevocability of the national sales." In spite of this, the question was acrimoniously raised all over the country; the "buyers," it was declared, ought to be "intimidated" into "disgorging" their "ill-gotten" gains. New owners who objected were branded as though

**Problem  
of the  
Public Lands.**

## BOURBONS AND THE COUNTRY

they had been personally guilty of beheading Louis XVI. The mass of the peasantry was extremely perturbed; after getting their property back the "*seigneurs*," they declared, would also insist on the restitution of their "rights" and "privileges." Was not the future King Charles X said to be one of those already advancing these claims?

Unfortunately, the large majority of the clergy joined in the crusade. Under the Empire they had loyally observed the Concordat, but, as I have already pointed out, most of them, from the Bishops to the humblest parish priests, had remained hostile to the Revolution. The Charter, while safeguarding many of the institutions of the Consulate and the Empire, had deliberately omitted the Concordat which the King requested Rome to revise. The effect had been instantaneous in the provinces, where a regular campaign was inaugurated against "this abominable pact which Bonaparte had wrested from the feeble hands of Pius VII." In the dioceses administered by old constitutionals, the clergy rose up against their Bishops as well as against prelates who appeared to have given too many pledges to "Bonaparte." The few Bishops of the *Ancien Régime* who, from their voluntary exile, had ever since 1802 persisted in refusing to resign, returned to claim their sees. Disturbances once more broke out; throughout the south Protestants were regarded as Jacobins and subjected to violence. Moreover, since by article 13 of the Concordat a clean slate had been made of the nationalisation of Church lands, there were grounds for fearing that claims would also be raised in this quarter against the "new owners," who became alarmed and prematurely exasperated. Thus the provinces were full of unrest and almost heading for civil war.

In Paris public opinion in April was divided. While the mass of the people remained mistrustful and even hostile, the bourgeoisie, as we know, had sided with the King. But even the bourgeoisie began to show signs of depression as early as June. That solemn services should be held in memory of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette could hardly give rise to scandal, although it amounted to denying all the Revolution had accomplished; but to commemorate Georges Cadoudal was regarded as unspeakable,

**The  
Bourgeoisie  
Emblittered.**



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

since, according to police reports, he was held by many to be no better than a "murderer." But what more than anything else made the Liberal bourgeoisie, who at this time were quite irreligious, bristle with indignation were certain measures which they declared constituted "an attack on liberty of conscience." When, by an order of the 7th of June, Beugnot, who had been appointed head of the Police, made it compulsory for all shops and factories to be closed on Sunday, there was a regular upheaval of public opinion; but when by a further order of the 10th he decreed that all the houses were to be decorated in honour of the Corpus Christi processions, there was an even more violent

**Government  
by the  
Priest-ridden.**

outburst of indignation, people declaring that they would soon be forced to go to Confession. Under a Voltairian King, government by priest-ridden bigots seemed to have been established, and the myth gained credence when the Comte d'Artois, the heir to the throne, was seen carrying a candle in the processions of the Holy Sacrament—which, as a matter of fact, he had a perfect right to do.

All this gave rise to a rebellious attitude in bourgeois Paris. "The King's popularity has decreased so much," wrote a certain correspondent as early as the 4th of July, "that there is hardly a spark left."

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But the most dangerous centre of discontent was the Army. Certain measures, undoubtedly taken with the object of reducing its size, lent support to that other myth—that, in order to show its gratitude to the foreigner, the régime was ruining the Army and humiliating the country's pride.

The thousands of soldiers evacuated from the strongholds that had been returned to the enemy, and the thousands of prisoners set free from internment abroad, were returning to France in the most violent frame of mind. In April, 1814, the news of the

**The Army  
Infuriated.**

Emperor's fall had filled them with genuine grief (there are thousands of letters to prove this), and they had given vent to their fury. "We are sending you back the most horrid prisoners," wrote one Russian General. On returning to France they learnt that the Bourbons, "who had

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been restored by the foreigner," were preparing to dismiss "the brave defenders of the country." True, it had been found necessary to disband two-thirds of the Army. We know how urgent, from the financial point of view, this measure was; but it was carried out without sufficient care and discrimination. Soldiers were sent back ragged and destitute to the villages which, in many cases, they had left years ago. In this connection, too, one would like to quote the letters written by the poor wretches. They may be summed up in the exclamation of a certain old huzzar. "A b——y fine reward after having fought for one's country! The *Tondu*" (this was one of the Emperor's nicknames) "would never have let us be treated like this. Even if he got people killed, he knew how to reward them, too. But the b——y fool we've got now only thinks of the snivelling church-goers." The "b——y fool" was Louis XVIII, whom, on account of his obesity, the soldiers always called the "pig"—"Cochon XVIII." And into thousands of villages disbanded soldiers introduced a spirit eminently calculated to alienate public opinion in the already embittered country districts.

The fury both of the rank and file, whether they were still retained with the colours or disbanded, and of the officers, whether kept with their corps or put on half-pay, knew no bounds when it was learnt that the King, out of regard for his dignity as well as his safety, was reviving the old Household Corps of 1789 and earlier, troops known by such archaic names as musketeers, light-horse, etc., who enjoyed a privileged scale of pay, the common soldiers being given the rank and pay of officers. This gave rise to the accusation that the "financial necessity" advanced by Baron Louis as a reason for disbanding the veterans was merely a pretext, since millions were being found for these "curled darlings" who had never seen fire except in their own grates.

### **The Household Corps Revived.**

### **Dupont Favours Émigrés and Chouans.**

The outcry may well be imagined when General Dupont, denying his faith as a soldier of the Revolution, appointed *émigrés*, who had never borne arms except against France, to the rank of general officers, not to mention Vendéan and Breton leaders, who, like Chatelain, nicknamed "Tranquille," had merely practised brigandage. During the month of

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

July alone, 211 of these strange "Generals," and over 2,000 of these officers, recruited from the ranks of *émigrés* and Chouans, were introduced into the Army. The half-pay officers, whose numbers increased every day, fomented the fury of their comrades, who, while still remaining in the service, found their promotion gravely menaced by the influx of Chouans.

The Government had—extremely foolishly—imagined it would win the support of the Army by overwhelming the Marshals with attentions and favours, and thought Marmont and Berthier would be highly honoured at being put in command of a company of Musketeers belonging to the Household Corps. But the Army, to a man, refused to have anything to do with these "traitors," and the higher they rose in favour, the more they were detested—naturally! The company under Marmont, who had betrayed Napoleon, was nicknamed "Judas's company," while that under Berthier, who had merely denied his master, was "St. Peter's Company." That rough diamond, Davout, who was the only

### **Davout's Popularity.**

one of the Marshals to be held at arm's length by the Government, became the most popular of all the great military leaders, although as a stern disciplinarian he had been hated in the past. And when a memorial service was held for Moreau, who had been killed by a French bullet in the enemy's ranks—"Field-Marshal Moreau"—the whole Army quivered with indignation.

Moreover, the nation as a whole was almost entirely in sympathy with this attitude. There was an ever-growing painful feeling that the Princes were quite out of touch with the country; they did not, and could not, share the glorious or tragic memories the old Army conjured up. Certain of the Government's friends

### **The Govern- ment Alienated from the Country.**

displayed something worse than indifference for the victories won and the mourning they had brought in their train. The Prefect of the Rhine himself complained of this. "They even go so far as to make a crime of what is most honourable," he wrote on the 16th of July, 1814: "the spirit of patriotism, the love of one's country, and grief at the evils that have befallen her." Fezensac, who, though he had been a General under the Empire, was a born aristocrat, wrote saying that he could never forget that "marching behind the bayonets

## BOURBONS AND THE COUNTRY

of the foreigner" the Princes and their friends had once "triumphed over our reverses" and "mourned our successes." The "baggage-waggons of the foreigner" were visible on the horizon.

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Since the Army was apparently being broken up, people began to imagine that everything the Charter had guaranteed would soon be done away with, first and foremost the public lands.

As a matter of fact, the bourgeoisie were relying on the Chambers to bar the way to any attempt at counter-revolution. True, they did actually show signs of wishing to take back their recantations and force the Government to make "the Charter a reality"—to use an expression which afterwards became current. Indeed, the debates in the Chamber of Deputies had the effect of compelling the King to repeal Beugnot's decrees, while in the Chamber of Peers, during the debate on the control of the Press, there were loud and indignant protests when Clarke, one of Napoleon's old Ministers, who had become a fanatical supporter of the Restoration, had the temerity to quote the old adage: "What the King wishes the Law ordains," from the rostrum of the Luxembourg.

But the question about which the Chambers showed the greatest perturbation was that of the public lands. An ill-advised tour made by the Comte d'Artois through the east and west had given rise to alarm, for on it he had apparently implied that he regarded the restitution of the public lands to their "rightful owners" as desirable. What, then, must have been the feeling when, from the rostrum of the Palais-Bourbon itself, one of the royal Ministers actually conveyed the expression of the King's regret that when lands that had remained in the hands of the State were restored to their owners, "he had not the power to give this act of justice the extended application he had so much at heart." But worse

still was to come when this same Minister, Ferrand, after declaring that every Frenchman had now rallied to the Throne—a gross illusion—added the unfortunate words: "They have all done so; but while some have taken a bee-line without ever deviating, others have

**Ferrand's  
Statement.**

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passed through various revolutionary phases." The meaning of this ill-constructed sentence was perfectly clear—out of 34 million Frenchmen, barely 30,000 or 40,000 had kept a "bee-line." A howl of indignation went up from the whole country, and on the 17th of October, 1814, Bedoch bitterly denounced the phrase from the rostrum of the Chamber of Deputies. True, in replying, La Rigaudie, a Royalist deputy, launched out into a tirade against the whole Revolution, and the debate between its friends and enemies became violent in the extreme—that fatal debate which Bonaparte, from the beginning of the Consulate and throughout the Empire, had aimed at silencing for ever. In the end the Chamber passed a formal vote of censure on Ferrand's tactless statement.

The King, offended by the vote of censure, retaliated by bestowing on Ferrand, whom he still retained in office, the title of Count. Hitherto Louis had not been altogether displeased to see the Chambers debating with some freedom the Bills presented by his Government. But the Ferrand incident made him regard the Chamber of Deputies as lacking in respect, if not actually seditious, and from that moment he would have liked to abolish it.

Moreover, the Government was obviously tending to become reactionary. Dupont, who had undertaken the thankless task of "purging" the Army, was already regarded by the "true Royalists" as far too Laodicean, and he was replaced by Soult, who, for some months past, had been displaying exaggerated zeal for royalism pure and simple. His first measure was to drive all officers on half-pay out of Paris, his second was to double their number, and the third to promote to the rank of general officers a whole batch of *émigrés* and Chouans. Last but not least, he raked up an absurd excuse for having the worthy Exelmans, who had remained true to the Emperor, court-martialled. The result was increasing disaffection everywhere. In the Tuileries this was ascribed to "plots" which the friends of the Comte d'Artois declared Beugnot refused to see. And, contrary to the King's own wishes, the head of the Police, now suspected of "moderation," was replaced by d'André, a perfect nincompoop belonging to the Artois party.

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But even the cleverest of police officials could not have discovered a plot where none had as yet been hatched. On the other hand, there was a vast conspiracy in existence, a conspiracy in which the whole country was involved. "The refrain that all parties seem to be singing in unison," wrote Jaucourt in October, 1814, to Talleyrand, who was in Vienna at the time, "is that *it can't last*." There were ever-increasing causes for discontent,

for which a vent was still to be found in the Chambers. But on the 30th of December, 1814,

**The Chambers  
Prorogued.**

Louis XVIII, as the result of the Ferrand incident, issued a decree proroguing the Chambers for four months, and his opponents did not hesitate to declare that no more would be heard of them. The royal Government, entirely lacking in cohesion and coherence, thus found itself facing the country single-handed. But, confronted by obvious anarchy, fraught with the most distressing menaces, the vast majority in that country were already turning their eyes once more to the man who had founded authority on order and had at least shed a halo of glory about despotism. And, just at this juncture, news arrived from Vienna but little calculated to revive the nation's glory; for the defeat of France, already made sufficiently clear by the Treaty of Paris, was further emphasised and aggravated.

SOURCES. Jaucourt, *Correspondance avec Talleyrand*. Memoirs and Reminiscences by Thibaudeau, d'Andigné (II), Montbel, Molé, Vitrolles, Villèle, Damas, Frénilly, Madame de la Tour du Pin, Chateaubriand (*Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*), Barrès, the volunteer; Captain Bertrand, Captain Routier, Général de Fézensac, Général de Rochechouart, Hyde de Neuville, Guizot, and Madame de Staël.

WORKS. Those already mentioned by Sorel (VII), Driault (V), Marie de Roux (*Restauration*), Gabory, Herriot, Lacour-Gayet (II), Cassagne, Masson (X), Gignoux (*Le baron Louis*), Masson (*Marie-Louise*), Gautherot (*Bourmont*). Henry Houssaye, 1815, Lucas Dubreton, *Charles X*. Charavay, *La Fayette*. Latreille, *Après le Concordat*.

## CHAPTER LIV

### THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA

Europe of the peoples and Europe of the Chancelleries. The Powers divided. The Treaty of London; the Congress adjourned. Causes of friction—Poland and Saxony. What is to be the policy of France? Part played by Talleyrand; a clever game, but unprofitable for his country; he merely supports the King's policy; the principle of "legitimacy"; Louis XVIII's wishes. Preliminary conferences. Talleyrand makes his weight felt; "the Law of Nations" and "the interests of Europe." Talleyrand sides with Austria and England. The "*précieuses* of Vienna." Metternich does not at first dare to make common cause with Talleyrand. Opening of the Congress on the 1st of November, 1814. The Committees. Italian affairs—Genoa, Parma, Naples, and the Isle of Elba. The Tsar tries to confront the Congress with the *fait accompli* as regards Saxony and Poland. Talleyrand deliberately throws away his country's last chance. Castlereagh anxious to separate Prussia from Russia. England determines to install Prussia in the Rhineland against France. The Valuation Committee. The Treaty of Vienna of the 3rd of January, 1815. Results of the Treaty for France; Prussia, duly strengthened, installs herself in Cologne instead of in Dresden; triumph of Pitt's policy owing to Talleyrand. The King of Rome despoiled; Murat menaced. The dismemberment of Europe; Prussia gains on all sides; the Germanic Confederation. The peoples betrayed. The defeat of France aggravated. "The Treaties of 1815."

**F**OR five months the peoples of Europe had been anxiously, not to say desperately, awaiting the opening of the Congress. This Europe of the peoples was a Europe which had been entirely renovated since 1789. The *Rights of Man* preached for twenty years to the nations from Cadiz to Moscow by the armies of the Revolution and the Empire had completely transformed its soul. The appeal made by the Emperor to Italy, Germany and Poland had, moreover, awakened the consciousness of nationality. This new Europe, born of the French "mission," was awaiting a statute in keeping with this new frame of mind and condition of affairs.

But Europe of the Chancelleries had not changed. It was still the hydra-headed monster who, after having dismembered Poland, or allowed her to be dismembered, had in 1792 fallen on France for the sole purpose of cutting away slices of territory for itself. All it aimed at

## THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA

was to share the spoils of the vast French Empire. But since the pretensions of the various Powers were conflicting, they were afraid of reaching Vienna divided against themselves—a state of affairs they wished to avoid. Moreover, they feared the activities of France at the Congress. True, by the Treaty of Paris they had entirely crippled her, but, in spite of this, they were afraid that this formidable country, appealing to the Right of Nations, might introduce discord into the feast at which the Kings were preparing to take their seats; and they were anxious that she should not find any rift in the concert of the “Great Powers.”

The three rulers of Russia, Prussia and Austria having left Paris for London on the 5th of June, 1814, endeavoured to strengthen their alliance by means of another treaty. True; the hastily concluded agreements reached between Kalisch and Chaumont seemed to have restored the *status quo* of 1789 in Europe; but during the intervening twelve months the various

### **The Tsar's Aim.**

parties had been sharpening their fangs. The Tsar was now resolutely determined to restore the Kingdom of Poland in its entirety under his own sceptre; he intended to keep all the old Prussian portion which he had seized and to secure from Vienna all the Austrian portion. He was, therefore, urging Prussia and Austria to seek compensation elsewhere, Prussia in Germany, and Austria in Italy. Prussia

### **Prussia's Aim.**

would have been prepared, while keeping her part of Poland, to round off her territory by the inclusion of the whole of Saxony, and if she were forced to give up parts of Poland to the Tsar, to insist on being well rewarded for her compliance; it was with this hope in view that she had made common cause with Russia. Austria, on the other hand, was determined to lay hands on Italy again, but without herself ceding to the Tsar a shred of Polish territory or allowing anybody else to do so, being convinced that if Russia were allowed to advance to the Oder she would become so powerful that she would make her weight felt in Europe and forthwith use her newly won hegemony to carry out the traditional policy of the Romanoffs

### **England's Aim.**

in the Balkans. England was haunted by similar fears. True, her main concern was permanently to curb France, that “insolent nation” whom William of Orange, following in the footsteps of so many



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English Sovereigns, had so whole-heartedly detested. The creation at the gates of this still formidable country of a Kingdom of the Netherlands which, by the union of Belgium and Holland, would be an extremely important State, and the establishment of a very strong German power on the Rhine would suffice for this. Having reached this conclusion, the British Government returned to the subject of Constantinople. They were as little inclined as Austria to allow the Tsar to gain a footing there, and by refusing him Poland they, too, intended to nip the idea of Muscovite hegemony in the bud. But while Austria also feared the establishment in Saxony—that is to say, at her very gates—of a Prussia on the high road to becoming a Great Power, England was quick to see that this formidable rounding-off of her territory would have the advantage of making Prussia an even stronger bulwark against France.

Conflict between the Cabinets was inevitable, and the Allies would have liked to settle their differences in London. But they were too fundamental to be decided in a few parleys and the

### **Treaty of London.**

Treaty of London of the 29th of June, 1814, was reduced to an undertaking between the Four Powers not to allow the Congress to open until

they had reached a definite agreement among themselves. Meanwhile Russia and Prussia had come to an arrangement; Prussia was to cede her share of Poland, Warsaw and Posen to the Tsar, provided the latter, without prejudice to any other acquisitions she might make, would hand over the whole of the magnificent territory of Saxony to her. Austria and England, who might have opposed this, were agreed only in refusing Poland to the Tsar, but were not agreed—as had just been revealed in London—regarding the fate of Saxony, and were therefore still unable to

### **The Congress Adjourned.**

make common cause together. The solution of these problems was left to time; but this meant that the opening of the Congress was inevitably

adjourned for three months.

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What was the policy of France to be in Vienna? Talleyrand is generally given great credit for his attitude at the Congress, which Albert Sorel describes as a "political masterpiece." But in this I

## THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA

cannot agree with the great historian. That in spite of being completely isolated during the first few weeks he should first have forced himself upon the Powers and then gradually wormed himself in between them and destroyed their harmony was

obviously one of those brilliant achievements which thrill the connoisseur. But, after all, one is justified in looking a little bit further; apart from

**Talleyrand's  
Game.**

the game itself, where were the advantages? For France the advantages were *nil*. I hope one day to put all the cards on the table and prove that, in ultimate analysis, the game actually proved detrimental to the obvious interests of the country. Moreover, in order to judge the "masterpiece," Talleyrand's three operations must be taken in conjunction—the convention of the 23rd of April, the treaty of the 30th of May and the famous Vienna agreements. Having disarmed France by the convention, Talleyrand, by the Treaty of Paris, had allowed her to be despoiled of territory in a manner quite unprecedented. Far too clever not to have foreseen that, as soon as the Grand Empire fell, the conquerors of France would soon be at loggerheads, he should have waited to discuss terms of peace until they were all gathered round the baize board at Vienna, where he was certain of finding allies, and have turned the inevitable discord to account in order to demand a heavy price for his support. But to have refused, from the very beginning, to play this difficult and possibly profitable part was a lazy solution. Later on, of course, the Prince maintained that there was method in his madness—it was easier for him to play his game of dividing the enemy if he went to Vienna without having anything to secure for France. But, in that case, as I have already observed, the whole thing was merely a game from which France could derive no advantage whatsoever. All the same, circumstances might have arisen to enable her to regain something, however trifling—after all that had happened it could not have been much; Talleyrand, however, as we shall see, deliberately allowed this last chance to slip through his fingers.

As a matter of fact, in spite of services rendered, he felt that he was by no means *persona grata* with Louis XVIII, and being, above all, anxious to conciliate him, he was far more concerned in Vienna with serving the cause of the King than the cause of his country. Unfortunately, at this juncture the interests of the two were

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different, not to say conflicting. Louis XVIII had been perfectly content with the Treaty of Paris, which gave him back France more or less as she had been in 1791 when he had left the country; nay, more, he had been displeased rather than gratified by the addition of Savoy, which he regarded as the legitimate possession of his brother-in-law, the King of Sardinia. In fact, all the King's ideas seemed to be inspired by this principle of "legitimacy," though, curiously enough, it appeared to be irrefutable only when it served his own personal likes and dislikes. He wished the King of Sardinia, his kinsman, to be given compensation in the shape of the old State of Genoa, which was just as "legitimate" as the State of Sardinia; he wished to save the King of Saxony, another kinsman, and on the other hand to turn out Murat, King of Naples, who in his eyes was still "Bonaparte's brother-in-law," the "usurper" of a throne belonging to Bourbons who were cousins of the Paris Bourbons. He wished to have Parma, which had been promised to the wife and son of this same "Bonaparte," to be returned to yet another branch of the Bourbon family. In fact, his whole policy was literally a "family" policy, merely tinged by an exaggerated regard for "legitimacy," which also served his own purpose in France. But there was not a single item in his programme which was of any real benefit to the country—far from it. In addition to his desire to please the King, this regard for "legitimacy" was, for the moment, extremely attractive to Talleyrand. By loudly proclaiming the principle—even at his country's expense—ex-citizen Talleyrand-Périgord, the unfrocked Bishop and *grand seigneur encanaillé*, would once more be able to appear in the guise of a great noble, not to mention the fact that it involved a modicum of mystification which had never been altogether distasteful to this magnificent profligate of the *Ancien Régime*.

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He arrived in Vienna on the 23rd of September, 1814; Europe had already been installed there for weeks, but as the "Four"

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had not yet succeeded in reaching any agreement between themselves, they were postponing the opening of the official Congress from month to month. As a matter of fact, they were afraid of tackling thorny problems. The Tsar was displaying so much ill-temper at the mere thought of being crossed in his designs that everybody was afraid of offending him. Ever since the icy welcome he had been given by the "ungrateful" Louis XVIII, he had mistrusted France, the Bourbons, and above all Talleyrand, whom he knew to have been heart and soul on the side of England for the last two months, and there was nobody he was more anxious to keep out of the preliminary conferences. But how could a Power like France, even reduced as she was, be excluded from this "preparation" for the Congress? It had accordingly been decided that she should be admitted to the preliminary conferences, together with Spain, and that the Four should thus become Six. This was arranged at the last conference between the Four; but it was also agreed that at these preliminary conferences Talleyrand was to be kept in suspense.

On the 30th of September the Six met for the first conference. Determined to avoid appearing as a suppliant, Talleyrand from the very beginning adopted an obstructive, haughty and sarcastic tone. The game had begun. As mention was made of the "Allies," he immediately rose up in arms, and claimed that a settlement should be based on the principle of "legitimacy" rather than on the false conception of "the right of conquest," and furthermore pretended to be astonished at the assumption that the business of the Congress could be settled by such a small group. "But we cannot allow the affairs of Europe to be decided by the Princes of Lippe and Lichtenstein!" replied Hardenberg sarcastically. "Neither can we allow them to be decided by the representatives of Prussia and Russia," retorted Talleyrand, hitting out straight from the shoulder. This immediately showed with which party he intended to side. On leaving the meeting, Gentz, the Secretary of the Conference, declared that the plenipotentiaries had been "nicely hauled over the coals for two hours" by that fellow Talleyrand.

The Tsar was informed; as he had not been able to keep out Louis XVIII's representative he determined to win him over.

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And on the following day he granted him an audience. But Talleyrand met the advances of the "charming" Alexander with glacial calm. The Tsar, extremely irritated, exclaimed that "right" meant what best suited the interests of Europe. "Europe! Europe! poor Europe!" cried Talleyrand, the perfect actor, pretending to be almost desperate. The Tsar, taken aback, closed the interview.

Throughout the following days, Talleyrand maintained his attitude of frigid reserve. When the Six again met on the 3rd of October, he was so stiff and unbending that Metternich could not help exclaiming: "We should have done better to discuss matters between ourselves!" Talleyrand immediately sprang to his feet; with an expression of icy contempt he declared that he would not attend any more committee meetings but would await the opening of the Congress. And he left the room—still the great game.

They sent to fetch him back for another meeting. But Metternich insisted on having a private conversation with him. What did France want? She wanted Saxony to be returned to her King and "the so-called King of Naples" to be dethroned, replied Talleyrand. Metternich was becoming every day more alarmed at the prospect of having Prussia installed at the very gates of Bohemia, but he pretended to regard the refusal to hand over Saxony to Prussia as a concession that might possibly be made to the wishes of the King of France. Talleyrand shrugged his shoulders. He was merely defending a principle; it was only Austria who had any very great interest in the matter. Metternich, aware that he had been seen through, thereupon made it fairly plain that an understanding could be reached. As for Naples, only let Talleyrand "possess his soul in patience!" It was a hint that if only that hot-head of a Murat were given enough rope he would hang himself.

Talleyrand, thus encouraged, became even more stiff and starched when the others joined them. The principles by which the Congress was to be guided in its discussions should be established and proclaimed by means of a declaration. And the only possible principle, he declared, was "the Law of Nations." This meant safeguard-

**The Law  
of Nations.**

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ing the King of Saxony, which Humboldt, one of the Prussian representatives, was quick to seize. "What has the Law of Nations got to do here?" he demanded shrilly. It has been customary to hold Talleyrand's retort up to admiration. "It is responsible for your being here!" he snapped. This did not mean much, but it shut his adversary's mouth. Castlereagh drew the tiresome Frenchman aside on the pretext of reading him a lecture; but, as a matter of fact, like Metternich, he wished to sound him. What demands had he got up his sleeve on his country's behalf? None, was the substance of Talleyrand's reply. When the meeting was resumed, Castlereagh, who had been agreeably surprised, supported the demand of the man who had undertaken, perhaps mistakenly, not to claim anything for his own country. And it was agreed that in the declaration itself mention should be made of the "Law of Nations." "That fellow Talleyrand is playing Louis XIV's minister here!" exclaimed the Tsar irritably on the following day. Clearly this was a great triumph for Talleyrand and Louis XVIII!

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In Vienna, where 216 heads of missions and 500 diplomats were meanwhile buzzing round, everything was at sixes and sevens, a regular hotbed of intrigue. Great ladies, drawn from all points of the compass, were combining love and politics. The latter-day "*précieuses* of Geneva" were foreshadowed by the *précieuses* of Vienna, fair busybodies from Russia, Germany, Poland, Italy and France, who used all their wiles to enslave the statesmen, passing freely from one to the other, now the Tsar's mistresses, now Metternich's. Even the austere and gloomy Frederick William had his Egeria in the person of Julia Zichy. "Next to Saxony," sneered one of the diplomats, "he loves Julia best." The Tsar was to be found in all the boudoirs and it was from "the Bagration's" arms, as the Austrian police disrespectfully declared, that Alexander proclaimed: "Poland is ours. I shall never give it up. I am going to occupy it with 200,000 men. We shall see who can drive me out!"

Tales such as this were repeated everywhere. Castlereagh was particularly irritated by this one and it now became his sole object

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to put spokes in the Tsar's wheel. He tried to alienate Prussia from him, promising that if she refused to cede Warsaw and Posen to Alexander, England would not only allow her to keep her share of Poland, but would see to it that she obtained Saxony as well. The very idea made Metternich's hair stand on end, while the other German States were perhaps even more annoyed, since they had no intention of allowing Prussia to swallow up Germany.

### **The Tsar and Castlereagh.**

And they urged Metternich to return a formal reply of *non possumus*. As for Castlereagh, the Tsar again endeavoured to convert him and invited

him to come and discuss matters with him. At the audience the noble Lord was brutally frank; he was determined, he declared, to prevent Russian hegemony being substituted for that of France. This meant the refusal of Poland. Alexander was furious and declared that very evening under the roof of one of "the ladies of the Congress" that "his honour was at stake."—"Even if the world were to fall about my ears," he added, "I should not give way." Meanwhile, the Bavarian representatives, with a view to obstructing Prussia's designs, which were supported by Russia, decided to appeal to Talleyrand. The latter coldly referred them to Metternich; but he begged Louis XVIII to raise another army in order to give greater weight to the demands of France when the time came. Such were the circumstances in which the Congress was at last solemnly opened on the 1st of November, 1814.

### **Opening of the Congress.**

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It was divided up into committees to deal with Italian, German and Swiss affairs, not to mention those entrusted with the task of regulating the slave-trade and the free navigation of rivers, etc.

### **The Committees.**

Since Austria refused to allow the restitution of Lombardy and Venetia, whose territory she had again occupied, to be discussed, Italian affairs were confined to Genoa, Parma and Naples. Genoa was condemned to be handed over to the King of Sardinia;

### **Italian Affairs.**

her representatives had not even been allowed to attend the Congress and lodge a protest. By the Treaty of Fontainebleau, Parma had been secured to Marie Louise, and after her to her son, the little Napoleon; but

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"France," in the person of Louis XVIII, wished to take it away from the late occupants of the Tuileries, the survivors of the "usurpation." As for Naples, Austria declared that she was pledged to keep Murat there as a reward for his support of the Coalition. But once again "France" protested against the "scandalous" occupation of this Bourbon throne by a French soldier. While they were on the subject of Italy Talleyrand requested that Napoleon should be deprived of the Isle of Elba and transferred to the Azores, which were even further away. But the Tsar declared, as he had done in the case of Parma, that he was bound by the Treaty of Fontainebleau. Incidentally, he was by no means sorry to frustrate the wishes of Louis XVIII, whom he disliked more and more every day.

He was also becoming increasingly exasperated in a general way by what he felt to be the growing opposition to his plans. And he tried to intimidate his adversaries. On the 8th of November Prince Repnin, who was occupying Saxony with his Russians,

### **The Tsar's Machinations.**

requested Prussia, by order of the Tsar, to set up her own administration there forthwith; this done, he would return to Poland. But the Grand Duke Constantine, who was installed in Warsaw, informed the Poles, without waiting any longer, that the whole country was definitely to pass under the sway of the Romanoffs. Alexander, however, somewhat uneasy at the possible effect of this twofold *coup d'état*, made a last desperate effort to win over Talleyrand. He summoned him to him. "Let us strike a bargain," he said. "If you will oblige me over the question of Saxony, I will do the same by you with regard to Naples." Talleyrand replied coldly that Saxony ought to remain in the hands of her own King; to make Prussia abandon her claim all that was necessary was for the Tsar to give her back her Polish possessions. The Tsar was disappointed and protested; but on the following day he again sent Czartoryski to Talleyrand

### **Talleyrand's Opportunity.**

to obtain his final verdict. This would probably have been Talleyrand's opportunity to demand, as the price of the support so eagerly sought, something more valuable than the head of the wretched Murat. But, object the historians, he had been made no definite offer which he could refuse. True; but surely it was impossible for the Tsar to



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make this dangerous individual any formal offer for the revision of the Treaty of Paris unless he were encouraged to do so by a less unbending attitude on the part of Louis XVIII's representative! All the same, a tacit agreement might have been reached on the subject of the proposed "bargain." But Talleyrand pretended not to understand.

After this rebuff, Alexander turned in despair to Metternich himself and summoned him to an interview. But he was exasperated by the Austrian Chancellor's underhand methods, and under the roof of a certain lady, whose heart, as a matter of fact, Metternich—if one may use such an expression in this connection—had stolen from him, he had raged and stormed against "that plaster-face." At the interview, Metternich was cold as ice, and flying into a passion, the Tsar told him that "he was betraying his own Sovereign by rebelling against the wishes of Russia." Metternich left his presence white with rage. That evening the salons were full of rumours "of war between Russia and Austria."

Meanwhile, Castlereagh was carrying on his own particular intrigue, which was, as we know, to separate Prussia from Russia, by promising the former Saxony as well as the restoration of Warsaw. The Tsar got wind of this, and had a violent scene with Frederick William, who, reduced to tears, promised to remain true to him. Moreover, the English Government sent fresh instructions to its representative. Why hand over Saxony to Prussia when the latter could be installed on the Rhine? On being informed of England's change of attitude, Metternich made up his mind; on the 10th of December, 1814, a formal Note at last definitely announced that Austria was opposed to the cession of Saxony to Prussia.

This was clearly the result of the fresh instructions received by Castlereagh, who, at one moment, had tried to arrange for the King of Saxony to receive compensation on the Rhine. But Lord Liverpool had written from London pointing out that the latter would merely be "a creature of France" if he were installed there. Why not put Prussia there instead? She would be a formidable barrier against any attempt on the part of France to regain her "natural frontiers." Whereupon Castlereagh immediately offered Prussia the whole of the rich Rhineland. But Prussia insisted on

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Saxony; she would relinquish it only on being given proof that the territories offered her were at least of equivalent value. A search was then instituted here, there and everywhere for various "lots of souls" to be handed over to Prussia. The system was even extended to the other claimants, and a "Valuation Committee" was formed to weigh and measure the "lots of souls" each was to receive in a Europe who had no say in the matter. But, suddenly, Prussia truculently informed the Committee itself that, once and for all, she refused to renounce her claim on Saxony; and she brought her mailed fist down on the table. Castlereagh, who intervened, was so rudely silenced by the representatives of Berlin that his English pride rose up in revolt. And he went to Talleyrand to pour out his wrath. The latter caught the ball on the bound and proposed a triple alliance; France would not expect anything in return.

### **The Valuation Committee.**

Castlereagh, enchanted, rushed to Metternich, and returned with the draft of a treaty; France, who was to promise an army of 150,000 men, was to undertake to make no claims, even after a common victory. The Frenchman accepted this strange alliance, and on the 3rd of January, 1815, the treaty was signed with the utmost secrecy. That night Talleyrand wrote Louis XVIII a letter which was one long pæon of triumph, almost a *Te Deum*.

### **Treaty of January 3rd, 1815.**

It is not easy to share his enthusiasm. To expose 150,000 Frenchmen to the risk of a war merely to keep the King of Saxony on his throne, without expecting anything in return, was curious, to say the least, and if, under this menace, Prussia renounced her claim on Saxony, what advantage would France have gained, except that Prussia, having been given the Rhineland in exchange, would menace her from Cologne instead of menacing Austria from Dresden, and Austria be safeguarded at the expense of France?

\* \* \* \* \*

And this is precisely what happened. The treaty remained secret, but from the new attitude of assurance immediately adopted by Austria and England, the Tsar surmised that an event of which he suspected the nature had occurred to make them

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adamant. He resigned himself, though by no means with good grace, and himself urged Prussia to renounce her claim on the whole of Saxony; he himself would abandon the idea of uniting the whole of Poland under his sceptre; he would keep Warsaw and return Posen to Frederick William. Prussia gave way, but proceeded to demand every imaginable kind of "compensation"

**Prussia's Claims.** —she was to have the largest possible share of Poland, Saxony and the Rhineland, as well as much else besides. England was inclined to support

her. For weeks past she had been endeavouring to get Prussia on to the Rhine. On the 10th of October, 1814, Castlereagh had written saying that he had always been in favour of reviving the policy so dear to the heart of Mr. Pitt, which consisted in placing Prussia in direct contact with France on the left bank of the Rhine. He was now realising Pitt's policy, and, wonderful to

**Triumph of Pitt's Policy.** relate, he was doing so through the representative of France herself, for it was undoubtedly the treaty of the 3rd of January, 1815, that had brought it about. Moreover, Talleyrand, except for insisting that Mayence and the Palatinate should be given to other German Princes, and Luxemburg, with the title of Grand Duchy, should be handed over to the King of the Netherlands, raised no objection whatever, incredible though it may seem, to the installation of Prussia in the Rhineland.

At this juncture Louis XVIII's representative was ready to make every conceivable concession provided Parma were refused to "Bonaparte's" wife and son and his brother-in-law were deprived of Naples. As regards the former a compromise was reached—Parma was to be given to Marie Louise on condition that she renounced her little son's right to it. This she unhesi-

**Napoleon's Son Despoiled.** tatingly consented to do; after her death Parma would return to the Bourbons. Thus Napoleon's son would never reign even over a single village.

Metternich was just as pleased at the thought as Talleyrand, for both men were imbued with an equally abysmal hatred of Napoleon which extended even to his son. There remained his brother-in-law. Austria, who was well-informed, declared that Joachim Murat's intrigues would inevitably prove his undoing; but Louis XVIII, exasperated at his being allowed

## THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA

to remain on the throne for a single moment longer, decided to send an army against him!

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile in Vienna the Congress had become irrevocably engaged in the sinister path along which the "Valuation Committee" had embarked it. It was now merely a question of dividing between themselves the remnants of Europe, whether large or small. Poland was again dismembered and Saxony was cut up into little bits—she might have been displayed on a butcher's stall. Prussia took a third; when she was refused Leipzig, she declared she had been very badly treated; to pacify her the Tsar made her a present of some more Poles—the inhabitants of Thorn. As on the Rhine, she was refused possession of Mayence, she protested; and she also protested when the Rhineland Palatinate was given to Bavaria. She demanded and obtained Swedish Pomerania, although it had at first been promised to Denmark by way of compensation for Norway, which, in spite of the indignation of her people, had been sacrificed to the ambitions of Bernadotte. All that remained to King Christian was Lauenburg. "You have won all hearts," the Tsar observed to him on his departure. "Yes," replied the unfortunate Monarch sadly, "but not a single soul."

This was certainly not the case with the King of Prussia. After being loaded with gifts, the territorial strength of his State was so greatly increased that, at the first imperial election, the Hohenzollerns had every prospect of supplanting the Habsburgs in the reconstructed German body. And it was for this reason that, with the object of calming Vienna's fears, Germany was made simply a Confederation, the Presidency of which was vested for all time in the person of the Emperor of Austria.

Meanwhile, distributions continued to be made right and left. To crown all, the Congress thought fit to accede to a request put forward by England, who, under the cloak of humanitarianism, was serving their own interests by having the negro slave-trade condemned. Apparently the white slave-trade was enough.

By the end of February, 1815, the Congress had finished its odious task. The "last act" might then have been signed, and

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Talleyrand would no doubt have found it quite as "good" and "noble" as the Treaty of Paris. And yet, by sanctioning the formation of a Kingdom of the Netherlands, by establishing on the Rhine a Prussia grown powerful and, generally speaking, by granting a frequently inordinate access of strength to certain other States, the Treaties of Vienna merely served to aggravate the parlous position of France, whose territory had already been so seriously curtailed by the Treaty of Paris. She was not slow to discover this and was soon roundly cursing "the Treaties of 1815."

She was not alone in this. The Europe that emerged from these treaties was such that for a hundred years and more she was condemned to the most terrible upheavals. From the Belgians delivered over to the Dutch and the Rhinelanders who, for fifty years, were to call themselves *Muss-Preussen*—compulsory Prussians—to fair Italy, once again parcelled out, noble Poland thrust back into servitude, and poor Norway, in spite of her protestations, handed over to Sweden, a loud cry of despair was already rising up and was to be heard again and again for forty, fifty, a hundred years. All the elements of upheaval were present, for there had been an entire disregard for the inalienable Right of Nations.

### **The Peoples Betrayed.**

Is it surprising that, almost before the Treaties had been signed, the peoples, even without foreseeing all these evils, should instinctively have condemned the work of Vienna? Is it surprising that they should already be regarding in an extraordinarily favourable light the man whose terrible downfall had given the signal for so many misdeeds to be committed by the very persons who had hypocritically pretended "to liberate Europe"? First and foremost among the victims, France emerged from this odious liquidation of the Napoleonic Empire even more humiliated than she had been by the defeat itself.

### **Unpopularity of the Treaties.**

**SOURCES.** Martens, *Recueil des traités. Correspondance de Talleyrand avec Louis XVIII*, published by Pallain. Castlereagh, *Memoirs and Correspondence*. Wellington, *Despatches* (VII). Pozzo di Borgo, *Correspondance*. Polovtsov, *Correspondance des ambassadeurs russes*. Gentz, *Memoirs and Letters*. Nesselrode, *Autobiography*. Consalvi, *Correspondance*. Hardenberg, *Memoirs*. Metternich, *Memoirs and Documents* (V). Talleyrand, *Mémoires*. Weil, *Austrian Police Reports*.

**WORKS.** Those already mentioned by Sorel (VIII), Driault (V), Masson (XI), Houssaye (1815, II), Lacour-Gayet (*Talleyrand*) and Pingaud (*Talleyrand au Congrès de Vienne: Revue historique*, Vol. XX), The Grand Duke Nicholas (*L'Empereur Alexandre*), Rain (*Alexandre I*).

## CHAPTER LV

### THE RETURN FROM THE ISLE OF ELBA

The northern conspiracy. Revival of parties. Public opinion exasperated. The service at Saint-Denis. Vexation and annoyance. The masses discontented. Fleury de Chaboulon sets out for the Isle of Elba. "The Isle of Rest." Napoleon, hurt at being separated from his wife and child, menaced with deportation and assassination and, deprived of money, becomes anxious and irritated. He receives Fleury and makes up his mind to leave the Isle of Elba. The flight of the Eagle. The landing. The Alpine route. The Laffray defile. The entry into Grenoble. The news received in Paris. The Princes sent to the provinces. Napoleon an outlaw. Public opinion perturbed. Fouché gives the signal to the northern conspirators. "The cloud." The Comte d'Artois and MacDonald at Lyons. The town throws open its gates to Napoleon. "Lynch him!" The Lyons decrees. Napoleon at Mâcon. He is anxious about Ney. The latter, convinced by the attitude of his troops, leads them to the Emperor at Auxerre. The convocation of the Chambers. Soult replaced by Clarke. Failure of the northern conspiracy. The royal session in the Palais-Bourbon. Flight of the King and the Court. The 20th of March, 1815; Paris on the tiptoe of expectation. Return of Napoleon to the Tuileries.

**I**N February, 1815, France did not yet know what was being plotted in Vienna, but she was instinctively mistrustful. As a matter of fact, at home, the country was becoming every month more and more alienated from the restored monarchy, and, as a result, the slightest incident was unscrupulously turned to the discredit of the régime by its enemies. When it was known that Soult, "in order to please the Chouans," was having the "worthy Exelmans" court-martialled at Lille, there was an outcry. On the 23rd of January, 1815, the General was acquitted and carried in triumph by the soldiers, who were delirious with joy; while, under the impetus of the event, some of the Generals in Lille decided to band together and attempt a military revolution. Drouet d'Erlon, who was in command of the division, and General Lefebvre-Desnouettes discussed with the two Lallemands, who were in charge of troops in the Aisne district, the possibility of

**The  
Northern  
Conspiracy.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

organising a movement for marching their combined forces on Paris and overthrowing the Bourbons. They confided their plans to such old servants of the Empire as Maret and Lavalette, and even to Fouché, who encouraged them.

Truth to tell, all this "Bonapartist" world, who had at first resigned themselves to their fate, were eating their heads off in idleness. Queen Hortense made her salon the centre of an ever more embittered group round which a whole society of malcontents was now beginning to ferment. Savary warned Jaucourt. "We shall have Bonaparte back," he declared, "and it will be entirely the fault of the Bourbons."

As for the old revolutionaries, their attitude of anxiety had changed to exasperation. The expiatory ceremonies organised in celebration of the anniversary of the 21st of January were seized upon by the Royalist Press as an opportunity for conducting a violent campaign against "the regicides," while from the pulpit of Saint-Denis, Boulogne, Bishop of Troyes, pronounced such a diatribe against the Revolution that Louis XVIII himself was terrified (he was the only person who still retained a modicum of common sense), and forbade the sermon to be printed in the *Moniteur*. On leaving the church, Oudinot, although he had become a fervent Royalist, exclaimed: "We shall have to cut each other's throats now by way of expiation!" The former revolutionaries, terrified out of their wits, turned their eyes to Fouché, who, having offered his services to the Bourbons and having been repulsed by Louis XVIII, was seriously meditating supporting the claim of the Duc d'Orléans to the Throne, if only to prevent the return of "Bonaparte." It was with this intention that he entered into negotiations with the forces in the north.

The Liberal party, which had at first rallied impetuously round the Throne, had completely cooled. They were extremely displeased by the prorogation of the Chambers, which some regarded as the first step towards the abolition of the Charter. The bourgeoisie were also irritated by it. "Louis XVIII must do as we wish," wrote a certain provincial lawyer, "otherwise we shall treat him like Louis XVI." Their exasperation was increased by the humiliations to which they were exposed by the returned aristocrats, while at

**The Service  
at Saint-  
Denis.**

**The Liberals  
Disappointed.**

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Court officials of the imperial régime, who had rallied to support of the Bourbons, were also subjected to various mortifications. The great ladies looked down on the wives of Bonaparte's Marshals and one night the Princess of the Moskva, on being subjected to their contemptuous scrutiny, left the Tuileries in tears. Her husband was furious. "Those creatures know nothing!" he exclaimed. "They don't even know you are a Ney! Do they want us to teach them?"

All this would not have mattered much provided the masses had been content; but, as far from being content, they were extremely dissatisfied. Industry was being smothered beneath the ever-increasing influx of English goods; the factories were closing down, and thousands of unemployed were being thrown on the streets; Louis XVIII, it was said, was allowing home industries to perish "out of gratitude to the English." In the rural districts the attitude of the nobility had undoubtedly turned all the new property owners, who were either actually menaced or merely alarmed, into so many opponents of the Restoration. Some of the priests cast caution to the winds, and pulpit denunciations were circulated far and wide. "They that keep the property of the *émigrés* shall suffer the fate of Jezebel and be devoured by dogs!" The repetition of such exaggerated and often quite unwarranted statements made the masses extremely hostile to the clergy, who, in compromising themselves, compromised the Throne. Moreover, the fact that, in spite of the promises made by the Comte d'Artois, the imperial taxation was still being levied, gave rise to exasperation. "The *droits réunis*," wrote d'Hauterive to Talleyrand, "are levied just as they were under Bonaparte, and, if possible, even more strictly." Last, but not least, the soldiers, even those who were still on the active list, openly proclaimed their detestation of the Bourbons. They would take out the tricoloured cockade from their bags and show it to each other; the Emperor would certainly return and allow them to put it back in their shakos. And everywhere, among the masses, "the return" was announced. "Do you believe in Christ?" one man would ask another in the street. "Yes, and in his resurrection!" came the reply. This was the password. And the plots that were being hatched in Paris were as nothing compared with this universal conspiracy.

**The Masses  
Discontented.**



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One evening towards the end of January a young man presented himself to Maret. An erstwhile *auditeur* in the Council of State he had offered to go to the Isle of Elba to tell the Emperor the way the wind was blowing, and had begged for a letter of introduction. Maret gave it to him and Fleury set out; but on his way through Italy he fell ill and did not reach Elba until a month later. During that month of February France had made further gigantic strides in the direction of the great exile; long before young Fleury's voice fell on his ears another voice, subtle and myriad-toned, had been wafted to him on the wings of some mysterious breeze. And when Fleury appeared the Emperor seemed to have been forewarned. "So you've come at last!" he might have exclaimed when he saw him; for Fleury was France incarnate!

\* \* \* \* \*

"It will be the Isle of Rest!" he had exclaimed when he landed on Elba on the 4th of May, 1814. Did he ever really believe it, or imagine that the rest could possibly last for long?

**"The Isle of Rest."**

As soon as he had settled down, the energy with which he tackled all the problems of his little domain gave proof of such mental, spiritual and even bodily vigour that Campbell, the English Commissioner who had been appointed to keep watch over him, was astounded. He was extraordinarily good-tempered with his English companion; he seemed to have no regrets, and even appeared relieved at having been set free from heavy responsibilities. But it was impossible for this to last. His first disappointment arose when, after a few affectionate notes, Marie Louise ceased to communicate with him. As a matter of fact, he was expecting something more than letters; he counted on his wife and son joining him. But they did not come; they did not even send him news. He never suspected Marie Louise of infidelity; doubtless Austria was keeping both mother and child away from him. But he was cut to the quick.

It was not long, however, before he began to fear the worst. He knew that there was some question of removing him from his

## RETURN FROM ISLE OF ELBA

island and deporting him thousands of miles away from Europe.

**Napoleon's  
Life in  
Danger.**

Others were going even further and declaring that the world would never have peace "until that man had six feet of earth over his head."

As a matter of fact, we know to-day that preparations were being made to assassinate him. When he heard that Brulart, one of George Cadoudal's underlings—"a brigand"—had been made Governor of Corsica, he was never for a single moment in doubt regarding the nature of his mission. "They wish to have me assassinated," he observed to Campbell; and there is evidence to show that he was not mistaken.

He saw that the time would come when he would not even be able to protect himself against a sudden murderous attack on his person, for, owing to lack of funds, he would be obliged to disband the body of 1,200 guardsmen he had brought over with him. In spite of the undertakings it had given, the Royal Govern-

**Napoleon's  
Pension  
Unpaid.**

ment had never paid him a single penny of the pension of two million francs settled on him by the Treaty of Fontainebleau. He had been living on his own small savings of about four millions which

he had conveyed from Fontainebleau and by January half the sum had been exhausted. How was he to live? How was he to feed his men; and if he disbanded them, who would protect him? In February he learnt that there was serious talk in Vienna of transporting him to the Azores, or even to St. Helena, which was said to have a deadly climate. "I am a soldier," he observed one day to Bertrand; "if they wish to kill me I will bare my breast, but I refuse to be deported." He knew very well that, even had he wished it, Elba could no longer be an "Isle of Rest."

Whereupon echoes of what was going on in France reached his ears. He guessed the effect his prestige and popularity must be producing there, and was already planning his return. He approached Murat, who was also menaced, and was now ready to throw himself once more into the arms of his brother-in-law. But

**Fleury  
Reaches Elba.**

he was waiting to be better informed. Then Fleury presented himself and, as good luck would have it, confirmed his suspicions—France was calling

him! After listening attentively to the messenger, he shut himself up in a silence big with thought.

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

On the 25th of January, 1815, he warned Murat to hold himself in readiness. He dictated two proclamations, one to the French people and the other to the soldiers. The latter ended with the famous words: "Victory will advance at a charge. The eagle,

### **The Flight of the Eagle.**

bearing the national colours, will fly from belfry to belfry to the towers of Notre-Dame!" On the 26th he embarked on the *Inconstant* saluted by all the guns of his little island. He took with him only twelve hundred men; had they been only one hundred he would still have gone.

As a matter of fact, to use the apt description of one of his last biographers, the world was to witness an event unique in history—"the invasion of a country by a single man."

At midday on the 1st of March, 1815, he landed on the shore of the Gulf of Juan. He had already given instructions to his men: "You will not fire a single shot. Remember, I wish to regain my crown without spilling a drop of blood." It

### **The Landing.**

seemed a mad idea, but they were all filled with a sublime faith in the man whom they never ceased to regard as a miracle.



Remembering the hostile and insulting attitude of the people of Provence when he had passed through that district in April,

### **The Alpine Route.**

1814, he decided to make for Lyons *via* the Alps, where he knew the inhabitants to be "patriotic." From Cannes he went to Grasse, and then to the Alps. People were already flocking to him, shouting "*Vive l'Empereur!*" He marched on foot with his men along the steep mountain roads. On the 3rd of March, after a march of about 29 miles, he reached Barême *via* Castellane. At every step the acclamations grew more and more vociferous.

Meanwhile the news of his landing was spreading; it reached Masséna, who was in command at Marseilles; he sent some troops in the direction of Sisteron and, on the 4th, warned Paris. On that day the Emperor reached Digne, where he organised his little column before marching on Sisteron, arriving there before the troops sent against him by the Prince of Essling. Thus he was able to sleep comfortably at Gap, from which the General and

## RETURN FROM ISLE OF ELBA

Prefect had beaten a hasty retreat, and on the following day he was in Corps, only one march from Grenoble. The people were beginning to crowd on his route, hailing "the return." He sent Cambronne ahead to La Mure to make enquiries about the feeling in Grenoble. Fourier, the Prefect, and General Marchand, who was in command of the forces, were determined to bar his way; but the attitude of the troops was obviously so favourable to the man who had returned that Marchand made up his mind to keep the garrison inside the walls. And he sent only one battalion of

**The Laffray** the fifth line regiment to the Laffray defile, through  
**Defile.** which the Emperor would have to pass on his way from La Mure. At La Mure the people gave him a triumphant reception; 1,500 peasants joined his column shouting "*Vive l'Empereur!*" with the soldiers. When Napoleon heard that the battalion was in the defile, he advanced to the head of the column.

It is a celebrated scene. All by himself the Emperor stepped forward to face the soldiers, who were pale with emotion. "Soldiers of the 5th," he exclaimed, "you know me! If there is a single man among you who wishes to kill his Emperor, he can do so. Here I am!" But with ear-splitting shouts of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" they broke their ranks; the column, swelled by the battalion that had been sent to bar its way, was re-formed and marched on Grenoble.

The town was mad with excitement and whole-heartedly in favour of the Emperor, soldiers and civilians alike openly declaring themselves on his side. In spite of this, Marchand felt he could trust the line regiments, more especially the 7th, which was commanded by La Bédoyère, who was mistakenly regarded as a supporter of the Bourbon Government. We now know that this young Colonel had long been devoted to the Emperor. Assembling his regiment, he informed the men of his intention to lead them over to Napoleon, and with vociferous shouts of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" the whole 3,000 followed him out of Grenoble, and eagerly hastened to meet the Master. In a flash the town was in a ferment, and Marchand, completely taken aback, had the gates closed. Napoleon, who had been joined by La Bédoyère, presented himself before the Bonne Gate, on the other side of which he could hear the people acclaiming him. They were hurling themselves against the doors, trying to force them open. At last they

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

battered them down with a beam. The Emperor entered and was hailed with transports of joy by the madly enthusiastic crowd. "I merely had to tap the gate with my snuff-box," he declared. Better still, it was the stalwart arms of the populace that had thrown it open to him. And he went through the illuminated streets of the town and took up his quarters in the *Hôtel des Trois Dauphins*.

He remained for thirty-six hours in Grenoble, where he received the constituted authorities at the Prefecture. He had already resumed "the imperial attitude."—"It is all over," he observed to Drouot and Bertrand. "In ten days I shall be in the Tuileries."

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Meanwhile, Masséna's despatch announcing Napoleon's landing in the Gulf of Juan had reached the King on the 5th of March.

**The News Reaches Paris.** Incredible as it may seem, the latter did not appear perturbed. He merely handed it over to the Minister of War. He was convinced that the mad venture would be the end of Napoleon, and far from being alarmed by it, was almost pleased by what he regarded as a blunder. Soult addressed an order of the day to the troops; it concluded with the words: "The fellow is nothing but an adventurer!" Who could have believed that only two months later he would be the "adventurer's" Major-General? It was decided that in order to confirm the loyalty of the people the Duc de Berry should go to the Franche-Comté and the Comte d'Artois to Lyons, while MacDonald was to join the Duc d'Angoulême, who had just completed a tour of the south, at Nîmes. If necessary the Princes would organise the defence; and, in order to keep the Duc d'Orléans, who was arousing suspicion, out of Paris, he was sent to join the Comte d'Artois. In the end Berry remained in the capital, but Ney was summoned in his stead to take command of the troops in Franche-Comté.

**The Princes Sent to the Provinces.**

**Napoleon an Outlaw.**

On the 6th the Council met again and drew up a declaration proclaiming Napoleon an outlaw to whom all succour was to be denied. As it was important to

## RETURN FROM ISLE OF ELBA

win over the Liberals, whose attitude had been dubious for some weeks past, an order convoking the Chamber was signed.

Public opinion was extremely perturbed, and an effort was made to calm it, word being given to say that the fellow had been caught, "like a mouse in a trap," between the loyal garrison at Grenoble and the troops sent out against him by Marshal Masséna. Unfortunately for Louis XVIII, a lion is seldom caught in a mouse-trap.

Napoleon's friends were more scared than jubilant and, terrified of being held to account for him, made themselves scarce. As for Fouché, he was now playing not a double but a triple game. Napoleon and the Bourbons were equally odious to him, and while safeguarding himself on both sides, he was still hoping to be rid of the latter without having to bow down to the former.

**Fouché's  
Duplicity.** Wherever it served a useful purpose he got into touch once more with Maret, the Emperor's tool, at the same time assuring the friends of the Comte d'Artois of his devotion, which he declared troubles and trials had merely served to strengthen. But he was also urging the military conspirators in the north to expedite their movement which he wished to exploit for his own ends; as soon as the Royal Government had been overthrown, he hoped to set up another of his own choosing, probably with the Duc d'Orléans as figure-head. On the fall of Napoleon he would be master of the situation; the success of this last desperate thrust on the part of the hero of Elba seemed to him out of the question.

To the Royalists it seemed even more remote. They were completely reassured when Ney, who had been summoned to the Tuileries, declared himself ready to stop the "adventurer" dead, swearing that "he would bring him back in an iron cage." But on the 9th of March Paris, dying for news, was enveloped in abysmal silence. The Government had probably been informed of Napoleon's triumphal entry into Grenoble. The public was told

**The  
"Cloud."** there was no news, the explanation given in the columns of the *Moniteur* being that telegraphic communication had been interrupted "by a cloud."

"I knew what that cloud was!" declared Madame de Staël.

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## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

The Emperor had left Grenoble on the 7th for Lyons. Behind and on either side of him marched a huge crowd of people, thousands of peasants and artisans, shouting that they would conduct their "father Napoleon" as far as Lyons and, if necessary, to Paris. They formed an avalanche which increased at every village and township they entered; it was the march of a whole country behind the marvellous man who had come back. On entering Bourgoin during the night of the 9th, the Emperor learnt that the Comte d'Artois, who had been joined by the Duc d'Orléans, and to whom Macdonald had also eventually been despatched, was in Lyons and was organising the defence.

True, the Prince had arrived in Lyons, but he had been greeted with stony silence. Lyons was one of the most "Bonapartist"

### **The Comte d'Artois in Lyons.**

towns in France; the Royalists had, moreover, made themselves particularly odious there by threatening to have their revenge for the victims of 1793. In view of the popular attitude Macdonald sent the Prince back to Paris and, after making an effort to defend the place, abandoned the attempt. He had ridden on to the bridge, to urge his troops forward, but only just had time to get back before the wave which was beating against the Guillotière bridge from the left bank broke against the barricade barring the platform; as soon as his back was turned, the soldiers pulled it down and immediately proceeded to fraternise with the imperial advance guard.

On that 10th of March, 1815, the Emperor entered Lyons at nine o'clock in the evening by torchlight, surrounded by

### **Napoleon Enters Lyons.**

wildly delirious crowds who, according to one eye-witness, "pressed so closely about him that he seemed to be swallowed up." As he walked along his face was very pale and his mouth was set in a somewhat forced smile. For with the shouts of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" were mingled even louder cries of, "Down with the priests! Death to the Royalists! Lynch the *ci-devants!* To the scaffold with the Bourbons!", revealing that France was again suffering from the delirium of the civil wars. The knowledge that all his work had been undone filled him with not a little apprehension.

Yet the movement might prove a force on his side. He hoped to be able to secure it by appearing to satisfy it. On the day

## RETURN FROM ISLE OF ELBA

after his entry he promulgated the Lyons decrees, which were

### **The Lyons Decrees.**

calculated to make him appear before the country more than ever before in the light of the Emperor of the Revolution. By these decrees the tricolour was once again made the national emblem, the Household Corps was disbanded, all the army appointments made since his departure were annulled, the order of nobility and "feudal titles" were abolished, the ordinances restoring the public lands which had remained in the hands of the State to their original owners were rescinded, all Bourbon property was sequestered, the returned *émigrés* were banished from French soil, the Chamber of Peers, "largely composed of persons who had borne arms against France and had an interest in the restoration of feudal rights and the cancellation of the national sales," was suppressed, and the Chamber of Deputies, "most of whose members, by violating the rights of the people, had proved themselves unworthy of the confidence of the nation," was dissolved. Last but not least, in order even more vividly to resuscitate the image of the glorious days of the Revolution, there was a decree summoning the representatives of the people to the Champ de Mars, the scene of the Federation of 1790, where a "Champ de Mai" was to be held at which they would pass their own laws. Thus did the Emperor hope to appear before the country as the avenger of the people's rights, the champion of the Democracy, the Sovereign of the populace.

He left Lyons on the 13th, once more accompanied by the acclamations of the mob, who had remained deliriously enthusiastic throughout the two days of his stay. A mighty blast seemed to be

### **Napoleon at Mâcon.**

blowing the breath of freedom ahead of the Great Man. At Mâcon the intoxicated joy of the inhabitants almost reached the heights of frenzy when he made his appearance; and at Tournus, it was the same. But the Emperor hurried on, anxious to know what attitude would be assumed by Ney, who had been rushed out to meet him.

It was not that he expected to encounter any serious resistance from the troops placed under the Marshal's command; he felt sure they would desert; but he was afraid lest that madcap of a Ney, with his usual headstrong impetuosity, would get a few battalions to follow him, with the result that he himself would be forced to fire the shot which he hoped, on reaching Paris, to make



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

it his proud boast he had refrained from doing. And he wrote Ney a friendly letter inviting him to join the national colours.

On reaching Besançon on the 10th of March, it was obvious to all that the Marshal was a prey to the most violent emotion, and at Lons-le-Saunier, whither he proceeded, he caused Capelle, the Prefect, great anxiety by his state of feverish excitement, punctuated by sudden fits of the deepest gloom. He did not attempt to hide his agitation from his two division commanders, Bourmont, the ex-Vendéan, and Lecourbe, the ex-Republican. When the Prefect described how the soldiers, entirely losing their heads, were flinging themselves into the arms of the Emperor against whom they had been sent, Ney exclaimed that the "humiliations" to which "the military" had been subjected for the last eight months made this inevitable. Just at this juncture Napoleon's note was handed to him. "I will receive you as I did after the Moskva." He was moved, but the unmistakable attitude of his troops unnerved him even more. "I cannot stop the tide with my hands," he repeated. Then suddenly he made up his mind; he would himself lead his army corps over to the Emperor. And he assembled his troops, whose attitude as they waited to hear what he had to say, was most menacing. Hardly were the first words, "The cause of the Bourbons is for ever lost," out of his mouth than a tremendous shout of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" rose from the men. As soon as the proclamation had been read, the Marshal rushed through the ranks "like a madman, kissing even the drummer-boys." Meanwhile the people gave vent to almost savage demonstrations of joy, and the Marshal, giving the order to march, led his troops to meet the Emperor.

The latter was then on the point of leaving Mâcon for Autun whence he advanced to Auxerre. All the towns through which he passed were decked with flags and vociferous with cheers. At Auxerre he met Ney and hugged him to his breast and then ordered him to march his corps *via* Joigny and Melun to Paris, where he would meet him. He himself was making straight for the capital with his little body of men; he would enter it alone.

**Ney's  
Dilemma.**

**Ney Joins  
Napoleon.**

\* \* \* \* \*

## RETURN FROM ISLE OF ELBA

The whole of France, even districts far removed from his route, was now in a state of ferment.

Meanwhile the Royal Government fondly imagined that all it had to do was to convoke the Chambers; the unanimous passing of an eloquent order of the day would reveal "the Nation solidly grouped behind the King." The Nation!—that Legislative Body

**The Chambers  
Convoked.**

which, elected before 1814 under pressure of the Emperor's delegates, had grovelled at the King's feet with even more abject servility than the Senate itself! An order of the day when Napoleon was making the soldiers drop their arms at his mere approach! In the interval, scapegoats were being sacrificed. Soult,

**Soult  
Replaced by  
Clarke.**

quite mistakenly held responsible for the military defections, was forced to send in his resignation, and his place was taken by Clarke under the absurd delusion that since he had for six years been the Emperor's War Minister, he would be popular with the Army. D'André, the wretched Minister of Police, was also dismissed on the charge of having failed to unearth "plots" which the Tuileries felt certain existed, though no trace of them could be discovered. The King was even advised to summon Fouché, but on being approached that astute personage managed to back out; he was not the man to champion lost causes! And the Police was given to Bourrienne, Napoleon's old friend and secretary, who had been dismissed by the latter for embezzlement and now made no secret of his abysmal hatred of his former master.

The ridiculous part of the whole thing was that the existence of plots was suspected everywhere except in the one district where a conspiracy was actually being hatched—in the north. Up to the last moment Fouché hoped that the insurrection he had fostered would come to a head, that Drouet d'Erlon's forces would reach Paris and that with their help he would be able to set up a Government of his own choosing in Paris. As soon as he heard of the Emperor's landing he had, as we know, sent secret instructions to Lille bidding the conspirators set to work. But Drouet d'Erlon having been forced to remain inactive owing to the unexpected return of Mortier, his corps commander, Lefebvre-Desnouettes set out alone from Lille with a few squadrons. He

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

was relying on finding the Aisne forces under the two Lallemands ready to support him. But on seeing the mere handful of men that Lefebvre-Desnouettes had brought, some of the leading supporters of the conspiracy refused to become involved in an "adventure." Lefebvre-Desnouettes continued his march on Paris notwithstanding, but found his own men melting away soon after he had reached Compiègne; he was obliged to take flight, while another General led the remnants of his squadrons back to Lille. It was an abortive attempt and the failure of the venture did much, for the time being, to restore the confidence of the Government, which immediately jumped to the conclusion that disaffection in the Army was not universal. The Chambers proceeded to emphasise the event by proclaiming that the northern garrisons "had deserved well of the country."

Both Houses assembled on the 13th of March, bursting with indignation against "Bonaparte," and passed motion after motion. Clarke, declares one eye-witness, boasting and swaggering, promised miracles. On the 16th the King himself came to the Palais-Bourbon, where he delivered an extremely dignified and stirring speech. While he was still being cheered, the Comte d'Artois, apparently moved by a sudden spontaneous impulse, announced that he was ready to swear fealty to the Charter which, somewhat late in the day, the Princes now regarded as a palladium. But as the acclamations died down and silence fell, "it seemed," wrote Chateaubriand, "as though Napoleon's footsteps could be heard in the distance."

On the following day came the news of Ney's defection. It sounded the knell. On the 19th, in the darkness of night, the unfortunate Monarch, together with the whole of his Household corps, left the Tuileries. On the morning of the 20th their flight was announced in the *Moniteur*. It meant the fall of the restored monarchy, which had collapsed like a castle of cards.

On that morning Napoleon reached Fontainebleau; with a smile on his lips he went up to the room in which, only a year ago, he had spent such hours of torture. And it was here that the communication reached him from La Valette announcing the

## RETURN FROM ISLE OF ELBA

King's flight and urging him to hasten to Paris. He ordered his carriage and set forth.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the 20th of March the capital awoke to find itself without a government; even the gates of the Tuileries, over which the white standard was still flying, were without guards. Before long the city was alive with rumours. Exelmans had gone to Melun to fetch a number of officers on half-pay, and late in the morning they arrived in serried ranks shouting "*Vive l'Empereur!*" at the tops of their voices. With some of them he gained

**Exelmans  
Enters the  
Tuilleries.**

access to the Palace, round which the crowd was collecting, and a moment later, amid a wild outburst of cheering, the tricolour was unfurled on

the roof. In the afternoon all Paris was in gala array. At five o'clock grand carriages began to draw up at the Palace, and their occupants, both men and women, wrapped in heavy cloaks, alighted. Under the cloaks were doubtless gold-embroidered uniforms and Court gowns; indeed, glimpses of them could be seen. For, still dazed by the marvellous turn of events, the former imperial Court was returning to its old familiar haunts, the lost paradise now regained. They expected to find the Emperor already arrived, and waited all on edge with anxiety. What could he be doing? Had he been murdered? They saw his old servants enter—Caulaincourt, La Valette and Maret; and then

**Queen  
Hortense  
Cheered.**

Queen Hortense, whom the crowd of half-pay officers who filled the Palace gave an enthusiastic ovation. Soon the place was full to overflowing: the reception-rooms, the stairs, and the vestibule.

Night fell, and still there was no news!

Suddenly, at nine o'clock, a sort of dull roar could be heard in the distance; it came nearer and nearer. There was a rattle of carriages driving post-haste over the rough cobbles, at times almost drowned by the frantic beating of horses' hoofs, whilst the confused roar of the cheering grew louder and approached nearer and nearer. A post-chaise turned into the side gate; it was surrounded by some thousand horsemen drawn from every branch of the Service and from every rank, all waving their swords and madly shouting, "*Vive l'Empereur!*" whereupon the

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

six hundred officers crowding the vestibule rushed out with such headlong fury that they brought the carriage to a standstill twenty yards away from the entrance. The door was torn off, the Emperor was pulled out, seized and dragged towards the stairs, at the risk of being crushed to death; for the crowd pressing behind him and the one rushing out of the building to greet him collided on the steps. La Valette, flinging himself forward, seized the Master's hands, and going up the stairs backwards, drew him through the seething mass. He gazed fixedly at him, his eyes full of tears. "It's you! It's you!" he repeated distractedly. And Napoleon himself, pale as death, with wild eyes and jaws set, seemed to be moving in a dream; thus led he ascended the stairs, apparently seeing and hearing nothing. He was dragged into the room, occupied only twenty-four hours before by Louis XVIII, the doors of which were immediately closed.

**Napoleon  
Enters the  
Tulleries.**

For the last two hours the flag surmounted by the golden eagle had been fluttering from every roof; it had indeed "flown from belfry to belfry till it had reached the towers of Notre-Dame." Ten years later Balzac heard the old veteran Goguelat exclaim: "Nobody before him ever won back his empire by merely showing his hat!" and he added devoutly: "God's greatest miracle!"

**"God's  
Greatest  
Miracle!"**

SOURCES. *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XXVII, XXVIII). *Portefeuille de la Comtesse d'Albany*. *Memoirs and Reminiscences* by Thibaudeau, Madame de Chastenay, Queen Hortense, Villemain (II) (*Les Cent Jours*), Barante (III). Macdonald, and La Valette. And sources mentioned at the end of Chapter LVI.

WORKS. Those already mentioned by Sorel (VIII), Driault (V), and Houssaye (1815, II). Rouff (*Chateaubriand*), Gignoux (*Louis*), Gautier (*Madame de Staël*), Madelin (*Fouché*), Gautherot (*Bourmont*). Gruyer (*Napoléon, roi de l'île d'Elbe*). La Bédoyère and Maricourt (*Georgine de Chastellux et Charles de La Bédoyère*). Stenger (*Le retour de l'Empereur*). Welvert (*Napoléon et la police de la Restauration*). Masson (*Petites histoires*).

## CHAPTER LVI

### THE RESTORATION OF THE EMPIRE

The Emperor appoints his Ministers; the Police given back to Fouché; Napoleon finds "everybody changed." The demand for a Liberal constitution. The Emperor disappointed by the general lassitude; he fears the neo-revolutionary movement. "Single-handed against Europe." The news of Napoleon's escape reaches Vienna. The Congress "delivers him over to the vengeance of Europe." Talleyrand responsible for making Europe adopt this attitude. The peoples in favour of the "returned exile." Napoleon's attempts to divide the Powers. He raises another army. The leaders. La Vendée refuses to rise against him; the Duchesse d'Angoulême fails at Bordeaux and Vitrolles at Toulouse. The Duc d'Angoulême capitulates at Pont-Saint-Esprit; France unanimously in favour of the Emperor. Europe forms a coalition; the peoples withhold their support; protests at Westminster; violence of the Prussian Press. Napoleon afraid of "delivering himself into the hands of the Jacobins." The revolutionary movement and the Liberal movement. The bourgeoisie insist on parliamentary institutions. Napoleon tries to win the support of the constitutionalists; Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant. The "Liberal canker"; the demand for clemency; Fouché advocates "a Liberal police." Napoleon forced to choose; he refuses to be "the Monarch of the mob," and is accordingly thrown back into the arms of the constitutionalists. Benjamin Constant entrusted with the task of drawing up a Constitution. The Emperor's "mighty arm." The Additional Act. It wins the support of nobody.

**C**LOSETED in his room, the Emperor received his old officials, who, hastening up one after the other, forced their way through the thronged reception-rooms and each in turn insisted on being announced. The crowd gave an ovation to Davout, whom the Emperor made Minister of War. But the man they awaited with the greatest impatience was Fouché. The extraordinary prestige he enjoyed had increased so much that, just as had been the case three days previously with the King's advisers, so now those about the Emperor regarded him as indispensable. At last he arrived and also received little short of an ovation. He was immediately conducted to the man whose deportation to the most inaccessible island he had been demanding more loudly than anybody only a few weeks previously. He greeted the

**Napoleon's  
Ministers.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Emperor with his usual assurance. Napoleon mistrusted him, but preferring to have him inside rather than outside the Government, gave him back *his* Police. Cambacérès, though obviously a broken man, was temporarily made Minister of Justice; but Napoleon felt considerable hesitation about the appointments to the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Anxious to placate public opinion, which he felt his journey from Lyons had enabled him to fathom, he wished his Minister of the Interior to be a man who had enjoyed a brilliant reputation during the Revolution. And his mind turned to Carnot, whose behaviour in 1814 had been exemplary. He hesitated about entrusting Foreign Affairs once more to Caulaincourt; he felt that in 1814 he had been lacking in vision, though he still believed him to be *persona grata* with Europe. However, on the following day the Duke of Vicenza, who also had his doubts, resigned himself, and Carnot having declared "that in the present crisis refusal was out of the question," the Government was formed.

By the evening of the 21st of March, 1815, the Ministers had entered upon their duties, but such was their attitude that, although the imperial régime was apparently restored, the spirit which had once constituted its most precious asset was obviously

**Everybody** lacking. "You are indeed changed; I find all of  
**Changed.** you changed. I am the only man who isn't ill!"

exclaimed the Emperor, when Molé pleaded ill-health as an excuse for refusing office. The greatest change in them was that they now lacked faith. He himself, fresh from his landing in the Gulf of Juan, and more astonished than anybody by the way things had gone, believed, above all since his reception in Lyons, that there was a general recrudescence of energy; but, on the contrary, he found slackness and timidity everywhere; the one thought seemed to be to induce the Master to disarm, and by supporting the Liberal parliamentary system inaugurated by

the Charter, to renounce his old methods of  
**Demand for** government. "What with their constitutional  
**Liberal** Charter and their countenancing of liberty," the  
**Institutions.** Emperor exclaimed before many days had passed,

"the Bourbons have ruined my France for me!" He was perfectly willing to contemplate the idea of constitutional institutions later on, but, surely, this was not the time to do so! Faced with the

## RESTORATION OF THE EMPIRE

most terrible dangers, what the country required more than ever before was a dictator. Lyons had left him under the impression that the people desired this revolutionary dictatorship rather than a Liberal government; furthermore, he half suspected that the newly found Liberalism of his advisers merely served to mask a state of moral lassitude which they dared not avow.

This conclusion disillusioned and depressed him. He was also provoked by the attitude of the very people who had acclaimed him; he had just been carried from Grenoble to Paris on the crest of an overwhelming wave of popularity, and yet he felt he was not loved for his own sake; he was merely a weapon to be used against the Bourbons, the nobles, and the priests. It was "a fresh outburst of revolution" that had led to his being welcomed, even by the Army, which the reaction against the nobles and the priests had also swept back to the days of 1793. Would he have to put on the red cap? He hoped not. But it was these "Jacobins," or rather the mass of citizens rising up in revolt against the Bourbons, who would raise him to the position of dictator, while all his old officials were urging him to give the country a Liberal constitution, which meant tying his own hands. He had to make his choice.

**Napoleon  
Disappointed.**

He had set feverishly to work. Everything had to be begun over again; above all, the organisation of the Army. For he had no illusions. "I am single-handed against Europe!" he observed to Davout, when he made him Minister of War.

**"Single-  
handed."**

He was indeed to be "single-handed against Europe," and, since all her representatives were still in Vienna, she would have no difficulty in forming a coalition against him.

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It was during the evening of the 5th of March, 1815, at a brilliant reception held by the Empress of Austria at the Hofburg, that a despatch baldly announcing "the escape" was placed in the Emperor's hands. The news spread like wildfire through all the reception-rooms, giving rise to indescribable panic. For the moment Talleyrand felt there was no alternative except a common declaration on the part of the Allies to all the Powers placing Napoleon under a ban, thus proving to France—Vienna as yet



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

knew nothing of the exile's triumphant progress—the futility of his mad venture and perhaps preventing the country from according him a welcome. On the 13th of March the eight signatories of the Treaty of Paris accepted the declaration, which Talleyrand had drawn up with his own hand, placing a curse on the Emperor's head: "The Powers hereby declare that Napoleon

### **Napoleon Outlawed by Europe.**

Bonaparte is beyond the pale of civil and social relations and, as the enemy and disturber of the world's peace, is delivered over to the vengeance of Europe." This was the "sentence of outlawry"

which by this time Louis XVIII had also passed on him; every man's hand was to be against him. Talleyrand had intended merely to serve "his King," and he was jubilant at this sentence of major excommunication. "History can supply no precedent for this unanimous repudiation by the whole of mankind," he wrote that same night. And as Louis XVIII's representative he had every reason to rejoice; for, by a master-stroke of diplomacy, he had just prevailed upon all Europe, including Austria, to engage in a war without quarter. "One can always treat with an enemy," he sneered; "but one does not remarry a condemned criminal." Only one voice was raised in protest, that of a certain brave Englishman, who in Parliament denounced as "disgraceful" the declaration which everybody, including the great Lord Castle-reagh, had signed.

As a matter of fact, Europe of the people was very far from sharing the condemnation of the Chancelleries. For weeks past

### **The Peoples in Favour of Napoleon.**

the Congress had laid itself open to the execration of all right-minded folk, and Princess Radziwill, a Prussian and a Hohenzollern to boot, referring to the portentous event, declared it was a visita-

tion from Heaven. "They have been far too vindictive in Vienna," she wrote. This was also the sentiment expressed by Whitbread, the English M.P., in the House of Commons on the 16th, before Napoleon had reached Paris; Europe, he declared, could no longer intervene against Bonaparte, since she had disarmed herself morally by carrying on the most infernal white slave traffic in Vienna. Some of the peoples had hailed "the news"—at this juncture this was the only "news" there was—with joy. From Warsaw and Christiania to Milan and Genoa, the sacrificed

## RESTORATION OF THE EMPIRE

peoples acclaimed the Emperor's return as their revenge and possibly their salvation. For Napoleon this provided a ray of hope, and in ordering Caulaincourt to have articles "exposing the greed of the Powers" at the Congress published in the *Moniteur*, he felt he was making a strategic move to outflank the enemy against whom he was also, though without much hope of success, planning a frontal attack.

Truth to tell, he had not taken the Declaration of the 13th of March tragically. For some years past recantations had been so plentiful that he had not abandoned all hope of bringing his Austrian father-in-law back to the fold, not to mention the Tsar, of whose dislike of the Bourbons he was fully aware. Moreover, he was in a position to make him ever more bitter against them,

**Napoleon  
Approaches  
Russia and  
Austria.**

for in one of Louis XVIII's drawers he had discovered an authentic copy of the Treaty of the 3rd of January, 1815, by which the King of France had entered into a secret alliance with Austria and England against Russia and Prussia. This document he despatched to Alexander. He also confided to Vincent, the Austrian Ambassador, who was on the point of taking his departure from Paris, a letter for the Emperor Francis in which he begged him to send back the Empress Marie Louise and his son and thus facilitate a "much desired reunion" which was "just as impatiently awaited"—Oh, cruel irony!—"by the virtuous princess." In it he also assured his father-in-law of his pacific intentions. Lastly, on the 1st of April a letter in similar vein was addressed to all the crowned heads of Europe.

He could have had but small hope of these missives serving any purpose, for as soon as they had been despatched he became

**Napoleon  
Raises  
another Army.**

actively engrossed in the reorganisation and arming of his military forces. And he was right; for his couriers were stopped at every frontier by what might have been a wall of bronze; to break it he was forced to contemplate less conciliatory measures.

\* \* \* \* \*

He accordingly proceeded to raise a fresh army. "Never,"

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

wrote one contemporary, " was such a vast military organisation carried out in so short a space of time." And indeed, before two months had passed, the Emperor, without calling up a new class to the colours, which would have alienated the country, had succeeded in collecting 400,000 men, of whom 150,000 were ready to fight after three weeks. He divided them into six army corps, the first at Lille under Drouet d'Erlon, the second at

**The Leaders  
of the  
New Army.**

Valenciennes under Reille, the third at Mézières under Vandamme, the fourth at Metz under Gérard, and the fifth at Strassburg under Rapp.

Mouton de Lobau was to remain in Paris with the sixth only until he, too, received orders to march north. Two other corps, the 7th and the 8th, under the command of Clausel and Suchet, were to keep watch respectively on the Alps and the Pyrenees. By the middle of April the Emperor was in a position to fall upon the Belgian frontier, but he was determined to exhaust every possible means of conciliation before assuming the rôle of aggressor. He also wished to complete the arming of his forces. "The safety of the State depends upon guns," he wrote to Davout. It is significant that he employed very few of the

**The Marshals  
Disgraced.**

Marshals in the High Command. Some of the most "guilty" were deprived of their rank, and he hesitated about confiding even the most insignificant command to those who remained. In fact, he seemed at first inclined to turn to the younger Generals who had been true to him in 1814, and would bring greater energy and devotion to his service, rather than rely on all these great leaders who were either worn out or compromised. Well organised, well armed and well led, his 400,000 men would enable him to resist invasion. But he required two months' respite.

There was a further necessary condition—the submission and support of the whole of France. It required only a few days for this condition to be amply fulfilled. On leaving Paris the King had cherished a vague hope of retaining a foothold in France by stopping at Lille and endeavouring to make a stand there. But the garrison in that town had adopted such a menacing attitude that all idea of installing him there had to be abandoned; and, after due reflection, Louis XVIII himself seemed to think it would be better to have the frontier between himself and

## RESTORATION OF THE EMPIRE

Napoleon. He had accordingly moved to Ghent with his Court, his Government and his Household Corps. He informed Europe of the fact in a letter, in which he made no attempt to conceal his disillusionment. "I found the troops consumed with impatience to rush to the support of a leader whose name reminds them and seems to hold out a further promise of the conquest and devastation of Europe," he wrote to Vienna; and, in spite of the advice of some of his friends, he made a fresh appeal for foreign bayonets.

The fact of the matter was that in France the provinces, on whose resistance he had relied, had failed him.

The Duc de Bourbon, who had gone to the west, had endeavoured to engineer a rising in Anjou and La Vendée; but as soon as the Emperor's return became known the *Blues* had gained the upper hand there, and the *Whites* apparently lost heart. The Vendéan leaders, waiting for them to reorganise their forces, declared that, for the moment, it was impossible for them to do anything. Bourbon was quickly disheartened and set sail from Sables-d'Olonne for Spain.

In Bordeaux the Duchesse d'Angoulême, a most courageous princess, had hoped to remain at the head of the "Royalist volunteers," and her bravery elicited from Napoleon the double-edged compliment of declaring she was "the only man in the family." But apparently Bordeaux had recovered from its enthusiasm for the Bourbons. The town had reaped none of the advantages it had expected, in March, 1814, from the fall of the Empire. The cession of Mauritius to England had been a heavy blow to the shipping community; the port remained idle, and public opinion had turned against Lynch, who, to the general disgust, had been rewarded for his services with the grand cordon of the Legion of Honour and was the only person to have profited by the act of treachery. The troops, held in check by the presence of the Princess, were anxious to join the Emperor. True, when Clausel appeared before Bordeaux, the Royal Volunteers and the National Guard made a show of marching out against him, but as he approached, these hot-headed young soldiers disbanded. Martignac

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

a lukewarm Royalist, thought of nothing beyond saving the Princess and as Napoleon himself had no wish whatever for her to fall into his hands, Clausel gave her time to take ship "with all the honours due to her rank"; after which he entered the town, on the 4th of April, amid the acclamations of the populace.

Vitrolles, who had been sent on the 19th of March to Toulouse to organise some sort of royal government in the south-east, soon reached the conclusion that things were in a very bad way. The whole of the south-east was submitting to the Emperor. On the 4th of April General Delaborde made a surprise entry into Toulouse and had the unfortunate "viceroys" arrested in his bed. He sent him to Paris, where he was shut up in Vincennes, in imminent danger of having to pay the penalty for all the rest.

The Duc d'Angoulême, who had reached the Rhône valley by the 20th of March, was, however, proving, to his credit, that his wife was not the "only man in the family"; for he made an extremely courageous attempt to hold his own against "Bonaparte's" troops, and even gained some successes against them. But caught at Pont-Saint-Esprit between General Gilly, who had marched out from Nîmes, and Grouchy, who had advanced from Lyons, he was obliged to capitulate. Gilly promised to allow him to take ship again at Cette, but Grouchy referred the matter to the Emperor. The latter, after a moment's hesitation, followed Maret's advice and generously confirmed the permission that had been accorded. The man whom only a fortnight previously the Bourbons had declared an outlaw no longer desired vengeance. He had no wish for another Duc d'Enghien!

It only remained for Masséna to proclaim the Empire in Toulon and then in Marseilles for the whole of France to be in the Emperor's hands on the 10th of April. On the 11th, salvos of artillery in Paris announced the end of the "civil war" which, as a matter of fact, could hardly be said to have existed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Napoleon was now in a position to confront Europe; but he had to be prepared for an attitude which was worse than menacing

## RESTORATION OF THE EMPIRE

—it was outrageous. All the imperial couriers were stopped at the frontiers and the despatches they were bearing, sometimes including letters to Marie Louise, were thrown, without having been opened by the persons to whom they were addressed, on to the table of the Congress. On the 25th of March, 1815, the Sovereigns had signed the Treaty of Vienna confirming the terms of the Treaty of Chaumont. Their General Staffs immediately organised a plan of campaign; three bodies of troops were to be

**Montrond's  
Visit to  
Vienna.**

sent to Italy, the Rhine and the Scheldt—a million men in all. One of Napoleon's emissaries, a man named Montrond, who had been chosen because he was a friend of the Prince of Benevento,

succeeded in reaching Vienna in disguise. But Talleyrand was quick to discourage him. "All you will find here," he declared, "is a natural and indomitable determination to await the inevitable end, which cannot be delayed three months." The envoy then succeeded in interviewing Metternich, who for his part assured him that they would never treat with Napoleon but "only without him and against him." In disguise he managed to inveigle himself into the presence of Marie Louise, but having

**Infidelity of  
Marie Louise.**

heard all about her in Vienna, he refrained from addressing Neipperg's mistress. He took his departure convinced that Napoleon was doomed.

On his return to Paris he communicated this conviction to Fouché, who had kept in close touch with him and saw him before he presented himself to the Emperor.

As a matter of fact, the attitude of the peoples towards Napoleon's restoration was still very different from that of their Governments. They condemned the almost homicidal declaration of the 13th of March. Exceedingly acrimonious

**Protests at  
Westminster.**

debates took place at Westminster on the 3rd and 15th of April, and the Opposition speakers

criticised and even roundly condemned the attitude adopted, first by Lord Castlereagh and then by Wellington in Vienna, protesting that there was no need whatever to make war on France, since it was clear that Napoleon had returned only because he had been summoned by the voice of the French people, utterly disgusted with the Bourbon Government. True, the House did not support them, and by 220 to 37 voted in favour of England joining the

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Coalition. In spite of this the City magnates drew up a petition with a view to preventing the Government from engaging in a fresh and now unjustified war with France.

Public opinion in Germany, on the other hand, was apparently rabid against "that odious France."—"We were wrong to show the French any consideration whatsoever," wrote the *Allgemeine Zeitung*. "We should have wiped them all out. We must certainly attack this band of 500,000 brigands. Nay, more; the whole French nation must be outlawed." The *Mercure du Rhin* went one better. "We must exterminate them; kill them like mad dogs," it declared.

**Violence of  
the Prussian  
Press.**

Exaggerated abuse of this description, as well as the friendly speeches delivered at Westminster, alike served Napoleon's purpose. He had both published in the columns of the *Moniteur*. The nation, thus placed under a ban, recovered the spirit of 1792 and rose up as one man against the enemy.

\* \* \* \* \*

Unfortunately, however, it was precisely this spirit of 1792 that the Emperor was hesitating to let loose in the country, for fear it might lead to another 1793. This brought him into conflict with his own desires. At the end of a fortnight he was faced with two solutions, both of which seemed to force themselves upon him. Everybody about him was agreed upon the necessity of breaking away from the old methods of the imperial Government. As early as the 21st of March, the Council of State itself had passed a resolution to the effect that "sovereignty was vested in the people alone," a doctrine to which the Emperor would not for a single moment have subscribed in 1811. The question to be decided was whether the people were to be called upon once more to delegate this sovereignty to the Emperor in the form of a dictatorship, or to retain part of it by electing deputies. Two movements, which at this juncture were opposed to one another but which historians have frequently confused, became more clearly defined every day—the "Liberal" and the "revolutionary," the former aiming at fettering the Sovereign and the latter at strengthening him.

The revolutionary movement, which the Emperor had seen in all its unbridled fury at Lyons, existed, as a matter of fact,

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throughout the country. It was sweeping him towards dictatorship, but on condition that he hit out vigorously against those who had declared themselves not only his enemies but also the enemies of the Revolution—the friends and agents of the Bourbons, the nobles, the priests and (here the phraseology of 1793 reappeared), “all traitors to their country,” “the creatures of Pitt and Coburg,” who now had all Europe behind them. There was a fierce demand for proscriptions, banishments, a sort of imperial “Terror.” “Do not be afraid of the Jacobins,” the Emperor was advised. “Your Majesty has need of the popular bludgeon.”

While the people were being swept along by the revolutionary movement, the Liberal movement existed only in the ranks of the bourgeoisie, who in any case were wavering. They wished to be reassured at least on the subject of “imperial despotism,” and, as I have already observed, having found their Promised Land in the Charter, hoped that the Emperor would not put on his own top-boots, but Louis XVIII's velvet gaiters, and restore the constitutional régime to the country.

At first the Liberal party seemed panic-stricken by the Emperor's return. Madame de Staël, who was still its Egeria, felt that her friends were “done for.” The dearest of these was Benjamin Constant, who had returned to France at the same time as herself, and on hearing the news of Napoleon's reappearance, had written an article comparing him to Genghis Khan and Attila and even to Teutates, the devourer of men, a terrific diatribe in which he extremely rashly vowed that he would immolate himself to the infernal deities rather than bow his head to the tyrant. As soon as the Emperor was reinstalled in the Tuileries, nothing more was seen or heard of Benjamin, though Germaine de Staël still feared the worst for him and for herself; but Napoleon reassured the good lady, both for herself and her friends, above all Constant. Nay, more, with a show of respect for her pet hobby he had Necker's daughter consulted about the best form of constitution to be adopted. However vehemently she may have denied it, she was agreeably surprised. The constitutional party, on being informed, was determined to insist on the maintenance and



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even the extension of the parliamentary system. As we know, the old high officials of the Empire had also adopted this attitude; those who had once been the greatest martinets, men like Savary and Maret, could now talk of nothing but liberty and the Constitution. The young Duc de Broglie made fun of this "fad of the moment." "One might just as well say," he declared, "that one is bound to be a Liberal because one has served in the Mamelucks!"

The first application of Liberal principles lay in a policy of "clemency," diametrically opposed to the demands of the revolutionaries, who were almost agitating for scalps. Napoleon had no desire for scalps; at the same time he was determined that the leading traitors of 1814 and active Royalist agents should be proscribed. There were only thirteen, of whom Talleyrand,

### **A Short Proscription List.**

Dalberg, Marmont, Lynch, Bourrienne and Bellart were classed as "traitors," and Vitrolles, Sosthène de La Rochefoucauld, and Abbé de Montesquiou as prominent Royalist agitators in 1814. The

number was insignificant, considering that thousands had betrayed, denied, disavowed and insulted the Emperor on his fall. But a violent outcry was immediately raised against these extremely moderate reprisals, and though the list of names was published, there was a general conspiracy to make the edict of "proscription" a dead letter.

The Emperor, who was now himself inclined to exercise clemency, was anxious that the principal beneficiaries of such a policy should be the clergy, a certain section of whom had, ever since March 1814, shown extreme hostility to the man they had once idolised. But nothing had been more distasteful to Napoleon

### **Napoleon and the Clergy.**

than the savage cries of "Down with the priests!" with which he had been met. Apologising to a certain monk, who was on his way to Rome, for having dealt harshly in the past with the Pope, he

begged the clergy to calm down. "Only let them keep quiet," he observed with a smile, "until the God of Battles has spoken!" But while this was all he asked of the clergy, he had no intention of allowing hostile agents to make trouble in the country with impunity. Fouché, however, in order to avoid repressing the Royalists, because he was anxious to make fresh friends for

## RESTORATION OF THE EMPIRE

himself among them, had invented the felicitous phrase "Liberal police"—even the police had to be "Liberal." But Liberalism of this stamp merely amounted to weakness; as a certain contemporary wrote, "a breath of meekness was blowing all over the country."

"Bonaparte's one hope lay in military Jacobinism," wrote Madame de Staël. "He should have used liberty as a weapon and not as a fetter." This clever woman was right. But for the first time the Emperor himself wavered.

He was inclined to grant liberty, and, above all, to allow the Press greater freedom than it had enjoyed even under the Charter; but, for the time being at all events, he felt reluctant to restore the representative system, the rule of Assemblies. The country was in the throes of a crisis during which even a traditionally Liberal and constitutional Government would have proclaimed a state of siege and prorogued the Assemblies. And yet at this very juncture he was being urged to summon deputies, when, on the contrary, he felt that an even stricter dictatorship was required. But to be chosen and accepted by the nation, it was necessary to give satisfaction to the other movement and rely on the revolutionary party. Napoleon had always been a lover of order, detesting in the Revolution all excess born of disorder. Furthermore, he had become a "*monarque à étiquette*," with a profound regard for the "dignity of the Throne"; he had no intention, he declared, of being "the King of the rag-tag and bobtail" as opposed to castle and presbytery. Thus, since he was loath to rely on the revolutionaries, he was thrown back into the arms of the Liberals.

**Napoleon  
Refuses to be  
a Mob  
Monarch.**

He confessed that "the love of public debates had revived," and ought perhaps to be indulged and the rostrum restored; but he was as little prepared for this idea as he was for the reopening of the "Red Cap Clubs"; and taken aback, as it were, by the twofold demand that was being made, he wavered.

Moreover, in this connection there was a noticeable change in him which occasionally astonished those who had known him so resolute and imperious in the past. The crisis of 1814, it must be admitted, had been a mortal blow to him. Neither his intellect nor his capacity for work had suffered—far from it; but he had

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less strength of will. In him, too, faith in his star had ceased to be the unshakable conviction of yore. "His strength was felt to be waning, and his genius losing its self-confidence," declared Villemain.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was in connection with the extremely serious question with which he was faced—a revolutionary dictatorship of a Liberal constitution?—that he showed the greatest "vacillation." Pulled this way and that, he hoped he had found a solution; he would grant a Liberal Constitution, but with no intention of putting it into force until the campaign was over. This would win him the support of the constitutionalists without hampering him with a Parliament on the eve of battle. As he was being bombarded with suggested Constitutions from every quarter, he made up his mind to shift the responsibility for drawing it up on to somebody else. He had always loved to put a round peg in a round hole, and

**Constant Asked  
to Frame a  
Constitution.**

since it was now a matter of "organising liberty" and restoring the public rostrum, he made up his mind to apply to the man who was, so to speak, "a dab at such things." His first thought was of Benjamin Constant. No doubt he also appreciated the piquancy of Constant, after behaving as he had done towards him, being made the Solon of the restored Empire.

He had summoned him to the Tuileries as early as the 6th of April, and Constant had responded with alacrity. Handing him the whole sheaf of suggestions he had received, he begged him to piece together a Constitution. As the Council of State would be called upon to debate it and Constant would have to defend his work in the Chamber, the Emperor made him a member, thus still further emphasising the incredible conversion to the Empire

**"Inconstant  
Constant."**

of the man who was now always referred to as "inconstant Constant." On the 14th the latter presented his Bill, and between the 14th and the 20th it was discussed every day. The hostile tribune of yore was now in the seventh heaven, and in the Liberal *salons* which he frequented in the evening even went so far as to declare that for

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the past ten years the Emperor had been utterly misunderstood. "We are reconquering him every day," he declared, adding that every day, too, a "fresh liberty" was won. Napoleon agreed to everything—the liberty of the Press and a representative system. There was only one point on which he stood firm—he resolutely refused to forgo the right of confiscating the property of the avowed and active opponents of the Empire. The Council of State, on having the matter referred to it, supported Constant, with the result that, at last, the Emperor lost his temper. "I am being forced into a path that is not of my seeking," he exclaimed. "I am being weakened and fettered. France is searching for me and cannot find me. . . . She is asking what has happened to the Emperor's mighty arm." And terrified lest he should change his mind, hurl everything into the waste-paper-basket and fling himself into the arms of the "Jacobins," who were loudly demanding the "Emperor's mighty arm," they gave way.

When everything was settled, Napoleon advanced a further demand. Though he was perfectly ready to introduce drastic changes into the imperial régime, he was anxious to avoid all appearance of denying the past. "The new Constitution," he declared, "must be linked up with the old, and receive the sanction of glory." He insisted that the new Charter should be known by the strange title of "The Additional Act to the Constitutions of the Empire." Again the Council gave way, but not without a certain feeling of uneasiness.

### **The Additional Act.**

Be this as it may, the Additional Act was made law on the 23rd of April, 1815. It was preceded by a preamble in which the Emperor, in order to avoid the appearance of having altered his attitude, hinted that he had always intended to endow France with "internal institutions specially designed to protect the liberty of the citizens." The new Constitution, which increased the electoral body and extended the liberty of the Press, was very similar to the old Charter that had been "granted." Chateaubriand, who was editing the official *Journal* of the exiled King, was simple-minded enough to write that since Napoleon was not the inventor of liberty, the Act was merely "an improved Charter."

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The effect it produced, however, was deplorable. All the parties had some hole to pick in it. "Well, Monsieur Constant, the Constitution is not a success!" observed the **All Parties Dissatisfied.** Emperor on the 25th of April, doubtless with a spice of malicious satisfaction on seeing the indignation it had provoked. "Sire," replied Benjamin, "that is because people have not much faith in it. Make them have faith in it by putting it into force." But this was precisely what the Emperor was by no means anxious to do.

For SOURCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY, see the end of Chapter LVII.

## CHAPTER LVII

### THE *CHAMP DE MAI* AND THE CHAMBERS

Europe remains obdurate and aloof. She endeavours to make use of Fouché in order to overthrow the Empire. The Bâle incident. Murat's escapade; his fall. The Declaration of Vienna. The final act of the Congress. The overwhelming strength of the Allies. The spirit of the French Army. La Fayette demands the appointment of deputies and the meeting of the Chambers. Napoleon regards these measures as inopportune, but gives way. The movement of the "Federations." Fouché opposed to the Emperor; he pulls the strings at the elections. The chosen representatives of the people. Attempt to engineer a rising in La Vendée; Fouché throws cold water on the insurrection, and it is postponed. The *Champ de Mai*; the Emperor proves a disappointment; the Army swears allegiance. The meeting of the Chambers. State of mind of the deputies. Lanjuinais elected President; mistrustful attitude of the Chamber. The Chamber of Peers anxious not to appear more amenable than the Lower Chamber. Napoleon at the Palais-Bourbon. The Chamber still hostile. The addresses; Napoleon's replies to the Peers and the deputies. The last evening. The Emperor leaves for the Army.

**T**HE restoration of the parliamentary system was, in the Emperor's eyes, all the more inopportune, seeing that war was apparently inevitable—and a war without quarter. The Coalition had been formed; nothing would dissolve it. The Tsar, on receiving the famous document which revealed to him the treaty concluded against him on the 3rd of January, 1815, could not conceal his irritation against the fallen King, but did not mention the matter to his disloyal allies. "It will not make me withdraw a single soldier," he declared to Nesselrode. And in reply to a letter from Hortense he sent a note to the following effect: "No peace, no truce; no further reconciliation with that man. . . . But as soon as he is out of the way, no more war."

**The Tsar  
Obdurate.**

The last words were in keeping with the policy of the Coalition; once again they wished it to be understood in Paris that, as soon as Napoleon was removed, they would take no further interest in the form of government France chose to set up. Europe

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

regarded Fouché as the man for this fresh intrigue and was as anxious to sound him as he was to be sounded.

**Europe  
Anxious to  
Approach  
Fouché.**

While at home this super-scoundrel kept in touch with all parties, he endeavoured to get into contact with the European Governments, hoping that, when the catastrophe occurred, Europe would force him upon Louis XVIII. But, by no means certain that this grand scheme would materialise, his thoughts turned to Napoleon II. However, on being informed by Montrond of Metternich's attitude, he began to toy with the notion of the Duc d'Orléans, the son of another "regicide." In any case, Montrond must have led Vienna to conclude that Fouché was the only man capable of engineering the fall of the Emperor, for, at the end of April, Metternich himself took the initiative and opened secret negotiations. In a brief note he told the Duke of Otranto that he ought to send an agent to Bâle, where there would be an Austrian envoy awaiting him. The note was intercepted and its contents communicated to the Emperor. The latter, who already had his suspicions of Fouché, sent Fleury de Chabaulon to Bâle, where he was to pose as the agent of the Minister of Police and thus fathom the intrigue.

**The Bâle  
Incident.**

Fleury came to the conclusion that, through Montrond, the wretch had actually made overtures to Europe, and keeping up the rôle of Fouché's agent, he discouraged Metternich's hopes. The latter, surprised, apparently gave up the idea of pursuing the matter further. The Emperor, extremely angry with his Minister, made no attempt to hide his wrath. "You are a traitor, Fouché!" he exclaimed. "I ought to have you hanged." Fouché, as usual, did not turn a hair. "I do not agree with Your Majesty!" he replied facetiously, and proceeded to justify himself as best he could, on the score that it was necessary, at all costs, to have "conversations" with Europe.

Meanwhile, in Vienna a new declaration was being prepared, the drawing up of which had been confided to a Commission. While they were still at work upon it an event occurred which placed fresh weapons in the hands of the Coalition and also, to some extent, upset Napoleon's plans. On hearing of the Emperor's landing in France, Murat had immediately made up his mind to act. He had his reasons. Fearing that as soon as Napoleon was

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master of Europe he would restore the old Kingdom of Italy for the benefit of Eugene, he hoped, by having himself proclaimed King of all Italy, to confront his brother-in-law with the *fait accompli*. On the

### **Murat's Escapade.**

15th of March, 1815, he had issued a proclamation to the Italian people urging them to declare their independence, whereupon he had advanced on Rome, whence the Pope had fled, and then on Ancona. Here he learnt of Napoleon's entry into Paris, which he regarded as a further reason for risking all. At Cesena he had fallen in with a strong Austrian advance guard, which he had driven back, and continued his march on Parma; but suddenly he found himself face to face with the bulk of the Austrian forces, and abandoning the idea of attacking them, had fallen back into the Abruzzi mountains. Hard pressed by the Austrian corps under Neipperg, he was obliged to turn and accept battle, and on the 3rd of May an engagement took place at Tolentino. His troops, which were only third-rate, melted away, and in despair he fell back on Naples with the remnants. While the Austrian army in his rear was menacing his capital, the English fleet was making preparations to blockade it. On the 12th

**Murat's Fall.** of May he entered the city, only to take ship in disguise for the south of France. Meanwhile, threatened with bombardment by the English, Naples, where he had left Caroline, capitulated.

The wretched creature's mad escapade deprived Napoleon of his only hope of being able to create a diversion when the campaign opened. It also provided Europe with an excuse for doubting his alleged "pacific intentions," and he was denounced as the instigator of the venture in which his brother-in-law had foundered. Moreover, in France, Murat's fall was regarded as an exceedingly bad omen and served to depress public opinion even more.

In any case, the event solved the problem of Naples for the Congress to whom, up to the last moment, it had been a source of embarrassment; and on the eve of closing, it definitely decided to make a stand against Napoleon. On the 12th of May, 1815, it accepted the declaration drawn up by its Commission with

### **The Declaration of Vienna.**

the object of justifying the march of the Allied armies in the eyes



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

of the peoples. Moreover, the whole of Europe, including Switzerland, was mobilising. Talleyrand believed he would be able to secure the signature of the King of France to Europe's declaration of war on France. And yet it was undoubtedly France herself that was menaced! "It is not a question to-day of adhering to the Treaty of Paris," ran the declaration, "but of altering it." The obvious implication was that it was to be altered for

### **The Final Act of the Congress.**

the worse. Having made this announcement, the Congress drew up, on the 9th of June, 1815, the Final Act which set the seal to the most extraordinary act of oppression and collective villainy the world has ever known; and Europe at once began to make preparations for again setting her heel on the head of France, thus summarily condemned, and tearing away a few more bits of her flesh.

The defeat of France, in fact, seemed a foregone conclusion. From the very outset she would find herself confronted by half a million men, and the number could in a very short space of time by raised to over a million. The 220,000 under Blücher and Wellington, who were massed in Belgium, were merely awaiting

### **Overwhelming Strength of the Allies.**

the arrival on the Rhine of Schwarzenberg's 220,000, in order to fall upon her, while other armies were advancing on the Alps and the Pyrenees; and as if, in spite of all this, the Allies feared defeat, "the Court of Ghent" was being urged to give the signal for an insurrection in La Vendée, which would force Napoleon to keep one of his corps at a distance from the frontiers.

Meanwhile the latter was wondering whether the 210,000 men, whom in June he would be able to hurl against the invader, would be enough, though their splendid morale might well have reassured him. The reviews he held revealed no abatement of enthusiasm on their part—far from it. "Last Sunday we were

### **Spirit of the French Army.**

reviewed by the Emperor," wrote one young soldier. "The enthusiasm was indescribable." This assertion is confirmed by every eye-witness. The enthusiasm was indeed indescribably; and yet, unfortunately, Napoleon was obliged again to postpone the opening of the campaign, this time on account of difficulties at home.

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## CHAMP DE MAI AND THE CHAMBERS

No sooner had the Additional Act been published than the Liberals called upon the Emperor to put it into practice. At Lyons he had promised the country to convoke a *Champ de Mai* at which its delegates were to acclaim the restoration of the Empire and frame their own laws; but the Additional Act, which had been submitted to the plebiscite, seemed to render this grandiose popular ceremony superfluous. Moreover, the prospect alarmed the supporters of the new Constitution, who insisted on its being put into practice before any such ceremony took place, otherwise they would refuse to believe in the Emperor's sincerity. The leader of this mistrustful party was none other than La Fayette, who had returned from exile and was destined to play an important, though extremely illusive part, in the last act of this prodigious drama.

After having skulked in haughty isolation for fifteen years, he had not been altogether displeased by Napoleon's fall, and had presented himself to the Comte d'Artois. **La Fayette's "Incredulity."** But the Prince's reception had wounded his vanity. Having remained more attached than anybody to the ideas of 1789, he had been extremely alarmed in the months that followed by the apparent victory of a counter-revolutionary policy. But unable to make up his mind what he really wanted, he had met "Bonaparte's" return with icy silence. Benjamin Constant imparted to him the plans made by the restored "despot" to govern constitutionally; "I beg to remain incredulous!" he replied. In due course the Additional Act had been published. But La Fayette's "incredulity" was still in evidence. A large number of the Emperor's friends seemed anxious to win him over to the imperial régime, which had been restored under the ægis of "Liberty," for in the past he had always been hailed as the "champion of Liberty." But when one and all, from ex-King Joseph to Benjamin Constant, approached him, he replied that he could not believe in the good faith of the despot, who was supposed to have been converted to liberty, until the Chambers had been elected and had actually met. As a matter of fact, he hoped to secure a seat himself and at last play the leading part.

Napoleon, as we know, had not intended to put the Constitution into operation until the conclusion of the first campaign. He very rightly felt that there were bound to be ups and downs in

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

this difficult undertaking before it ended in victory. In the past Friedland had been preceded by Eylau, and  
**Napoleon Yields to the Constitutionalists.** Wagram by Essling, and an Assembly, even animated by the most exalted spirit of patriotism, was bound to be affected by the first rebuff, and by exaggerating its importance would make the country more nervous than it already was. But, with a shrug of the shoulders, he ended by giving way, as though humouring a caprice on the part of those about him.

Moreover, the growing support of the people made him feel better able to face the possible hostility of the Chambers with equanimity. A vast movement was spreading calculated to reassure him; and yet at times it depressed him—*Federations* were everywhere being formed.

The movement originated in the West, where, confronted by the menace of Royalist uprisings, the *Blues* determined to unite and even form leagues. Thus as early as the beginning of May the Anjou Federation came into being; it was followed by the creation  
**The Federations.** of a similar body in Brittany, 20,000 petty tradesmen, workmen and old soldiers banding together and demanding arms "against the country's foes." The movement spread like wildfire through the whole of France and even reached the suburbs of Paris, where the people also clamoured for arms. While it was a frankly democratic movement, it was animated by an ardent love for the Emperor as the defender of France. The latter, however, hesitated to countenance it. He was still afraid of a fresh outbreak of revolutionary violence and civil war; and yet if he snubbed these eager spirits he would alienate the masses. He accordingly agreed to the principle; he would provide the Federations with cadres of officers as well as arms, and thus keep a hold on them. But those about him were terrified, and the constitutional party regarded the formation of this popular army with a far from friendly eye.

There was one man who watched the conflict between the two opposing parties with supreme indifference; he cared not a straw for the ideas of either; his sole aim for the time being was to exploit them all for his own ends. This man was Fouché. "*He can't last longer than three months,*" he had observed as early as the end of March to one of his confidants. It was necessary to

## CHAMP DE MAI AND THE CHAMBERS

prepare for the future, and he was already feeling his way with the Court of Ghent. He approached it through Gaillard, one of his creatures, who had secured an introduction from Vitrolles. Shut up in Vincennes, the latter felt it was only the influence of the

### **Fouché's Intrigues.**

Duke of Otranto that was saving him from the guillotine. As a matter of fact, Louis XVIII still seemed reluctant to reward Fouché's services with a portfolio, which merely led the arch-schemer to strengthen his position at home; though as yet he was unacceptable, the time would come when he would enforce his claims! He hoped to secure a hold over the new Chambers and use them in due course to drive out the Emperor; after which he would choose whatever alternative best served his own personal ends. Meanwhile the first thing to be done was to pull the strings at the elections.

The electors, all of them members of the bourgeoisie, were naturally in favour of "Liberalism" and intent on keeping out anybody described as a fanatical supporter of the old imperial despotism, and returning constitutionalists. As a matter of fact, the electorate was somewhat at sea, and the elections should have been conducted by a sincere friend of the Emperor. But it was Fouché who took the matter in hand. And he was determined that the result should be a Chamber which, though fiercely hostile to any counter-revolution in favour of the Bourbons, should, above all, be opposed to any revival of Cæsarian despotism. "By Jove! we'll give him a Chamber where he'll find a little bit of everything!" he observed to one of his friends. "I shall not spare him either Barère or Cambon, or even La Fayette, I assure you. It will do him a world of good! The time for exclusions is past, and nowadays men like them stand surety for advanced revolutionaries like you and me."

It was in the frame of mind above described and under the influence of Fouché that the Electoral Colleges approached the ballot-box and returned deputies some of whom were extreme terrorists and some constitutionalists whose names had been forgotten for the last twenty years, many of them never having rallied to the Empire, men like Félix Lepelletier, Cambon, Barère, and a score of others. But by far the majority were Liberals, both young and old, from La Fayette and Lanjuinais, who already belonged to

### **The Elections.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

the past, to Dupont de l'Eure, who represented the future. Lastly, there were those who belonged to neither category, ten personal friends, or rather, agents of the Duke of Otranto—chief among them Jay and Manuel. The old revolutionaries constituted a small minority of between 30 and 40, while devoted "Bonapartists" like Lucien Bonaparte, Regnaud de Saint-Jean-d'Angély, Boulay de la Meurthe, Ginoux-Defermon, and Bigot de Préameneu, numbered no more than a hundred. The rest, that is to say about 500, consisted of "Liberals" most of whom were destined one day to find the realisation of their ideal in the July Monarchy. One and all, anti-Bourbonians and patriots, too, for that matter, were, for the moment, animated above all by the determination to defend "the independence of the national representatives" against "despotism"; it was their one obsession.

Meanwhile the country—which now meant all the citizens—had been called upon to vote for or against the Additional Act. By the end of May the results obtained in 63 departments—seventy-five per cent of the whole—were made known. The

### **The Plebiscite.**

result of the plebiscite was 1,552,450 for and 4,800 against the Additional Act. The Royalists had abstained in a body from voting. For the last two months their main efforts had been directed towards hampering the Emperor's organisation of the defence by engineering a fresh rising in the West; and, indeed, by the middle of May there was every reason to believe that La Vendée was on the verge of revolt.

After the pitiable flight of the Duc de Bourbon, the Royalist leaders had secretly raised bands and having assembled at La Chapelle-Basse-Mer on the 11th of May, in obedience to express orders sent from Ghent by Louis de La Rochejaquelein,

### **Attempted Rising in La Vendée.**

the Generalissimo appointed by the King, they fixed the 15th of the month for a general insurrection. And it was on the 15th that the first shots were fired as arranged. There were very few troops in La Vendée, and although he detached a whole corps from his Grand Army, Napoleon was filled with the deepest anxiety by the revolt. Even Fouché was not prepared for it, and he offered the Emperor, whom, incidentally, he wished for the moment to placate, to quash this extremely inopportune attempt

## CHAMP DE MAI AND THE CHAMBERS

at insurrection by methods best known to himself. And he sent some of the tame Chouans, whom he had always had at his beck and call, to persuade the rebel leaders that, even from their own point of view, the insurrection was premature.

These emissaries found the ground ready prepared for them; the Vendéan leaders were at loggerheads and the arrival of General Lamarque, with his whole army corps of 20,000, put the fear of God into them. Moreover, they were chafing under the command of La Rochejaquelein, whom, being rustic folk, they regarded as a "courtier" and treated with but scant respect. They lent a ready ear to Comte de Malartic, Fouché's envoy, and on the 31st of May informed the "Commander-in-Chief" that they had postponed taking up arms. La Rochejaquelein, infuriated, tried to over-ride them; placing himself at the head of a few loyal bands he opened hostilities, with the result that he was defeated and killed on the 3rd of June, and the insurrection seemed to fizzle out. As a matter of fact, it had merely been postponed, and Napoleon,

### **The Rising Postponed.**

fearing a fresh outbreak, felt he must leave Lamarque and half his corps in the West; their absence was soon to make itself cruelly felt in Belgium. He would have liked a more complete surrender, but failed to obtain it.

It was not so much this business, however, that prevented him from going to Belgium in the middle of May as he had intended, as the necessity for dealing with the situation created by the elections. The parliamentary session was about to open; before it did so he was anxious that a grand demonstration of loyalty, with which the whole nation was associated, should silence the opposition and, above all, impress the Chambers. It was to take the form of the famous *Champ de Mai*, which, when he was in Lyons, he had promised to convoke without exactly knowing what might come of it. The results of the plebiscite would be solemnly proclaimed in the presence of 20,000 delegates, representing the various departments, and the whole populace of Paris. The acclamations with which the Emperor expected to be greeted would convince the recently elected deputies of his popularity and doubtless inspire them with a certain respect. He would not open the session of the Chambers until after the *Champ de Mai*. But it had been necessary to await the results of the plebiscite

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

which had been extremely slow in coming in. And the *Champ de Mai*, postponed from week to week, was not held until early in June.

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It took place on the 1st of June; it was an elaborate ceremony inaugurated by the celebration of Mass in the open air, at the end of which the Emperor swore on the Gospel to be loyal "to the Constitutions of the Empire."

**The Champ de Mai.**

This was followed by the presentation of the nation's address, which was taken to the foot of the High Altar and read in the presence of the huge congress, after which the Emperor made a speech to the delegates of the French people. The ceremony was concluded by the distribution of new colours to the National Guard and the Army. But, in order to command the respect of the constitutionalists, the Emperor was anxious that the ceremony, instead of being a great popular demonstration, should be a signal display of monarchical sentiment, and he accordingly felt it incumbent upon him to appear in the gorgeous attire he had always worn on great occasions, ever since 1804, and surrounded by all the pomp and ceremony of the Consecration. This came as a complete surprise to the people of Paris, as well as to the Army and the countless friends of the Revolution who had rallied to the Empire. As for the last three months he had been proclaiming himself more emphatically than ever the Champion of the People, it had been taken for granted that on the eve of setting out for war he would appear in his soldier's uniform

**General Dis-  
appointment.**

which was already legendary, and everybody was shocked to see him alight from his coronation coach decked out in silk and velvet, with the white-plumed hat on his head, and surrounded by "the Princes of the House," also dressed in white satin.

The ceremony was over-elaborate, and, moreover, it lasted far too long; the people became bored and the whole affair dragged. In fact, the effect expected by the Emperor failed to be produced. At one point only was there an outburst of enthusiasm. After Mass had been said, the address from the Electoral Colleges read, and his own speech delivered, the Emperor proceeded to the distribution of colours to the National Guard, whereupon, for a moment, the

## CHAMP DE MAI AND THE CHAMBERS

scene became most stirring and impressive. When he called upon the National Guard and the Imperial Guard to swear the oath of fealty "to the country and the Throne," a unanimous shout,

**The Army  
Swears  
Allegiance.**

"We swear it!" burst from the throats of 40,000 men. But this was not all; for a quarter of an hour the Emperor continued, by a series of brief appeals, to provoke time and again that formidable roar, that response which, like the roll of thunder, rattled over the Champ de Mars with an ever more deafening crash. "It was a spectacle of indescribable grandeur," wrote one foreign eyewitness. And it should have ended there, but the march past of the troops, when night was already beginning to fall, was tedious. Moreover, the sight of those thousands of men marching past the Emperor and acclaiming him inevitably called to the minds of all who knew their classics (and at that time their number was legion) the shout of the Roman gladiators: "*Caesar, morituri te salutant!*" And the final impression was that "the gesture of majesty" had failed. Nay, worse! to the newly elected deputies, almost all of whom were present at the ceremony, the Emperor's appeals to the people and the Army appeared a sullen menace and produced a deplorable reaction. They made no attempt to hide either their uneasiness or their vexation; and thus, even before the conflict in Belgium was inaugurated, hostilities were opened in the Palais-Bourbon from the very moment the Chamber met.

\* \* \* \* \*

The frame of mind of the deputies was accurately described by Jean-Baptiste Say, a distinguished member of the bourgeoisie, in a letter written just before the session opened. "The Legislative Body," he declared, "an amalgamation of all parties and of representatives of every epoch of the Revolution, while attached to the institutions of the Revolution and despising the prejudices and ineptitude of the Bourbons, is yet filled with mistrust, fear and even horror of the tyranny of Napoleon." Madame du Cayla declared they were "ready to set up a Republican Government," while Thibaudeau made the somewhat exaggerated assertion that there were not twenty-five among them who were devoted to the Emperor or capable of remaining devoted to the bitter end.



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

It was not long before an opportunity arose for them to show their mistrust. The Chamber of Deputies, which met on the 3rd of June, 1815, had to elect its officers. Ignoring the claims of Lucien, who had presented himself as a candidate for the Presidency, the Assembly made a choice which could not fail to be most displeasing to the Emperor, and elected the ex-conventional Lanjuinais, who under the Empire had been one of the few determined opponents of Napoleon in the Senate and, in April, 1814, had eagerly voted for the fall of his dynasty.

**Lanjuinais  
Elected  
President.**

At first the Emperor made no attempt to hide his displeasure. "I shall dissolve that Assembly!" he exclaimed. "The fools do not want the Bourbons and yet they refuse to support me, though I am the only man who can safeguard them against all they fear." However, he controlled himself, as he had frequently done during the past three months, and sending for Lanjuinais, pretended to approve the Assembly's choice. But it was quite sufficient for the Emperor to have been guilty of a delay of twenty-four hours for the Chamber to give vent to its displeasure, and extremely acrimonious speeches were delivered from the rostrum. From the attitude of the Chamber, no one would have dreamt that an enemy 220,000 strong was massed on the northern frontier; the enemy was the Master's "despotism!" As the Emperor had feared, a parliamentary intrigue was already in full swing.

**The Deputies  
Mistrustful.**

He should at least have arranged that the Chamber of Peers, nominations to which had been constantly postponed until the last possible moment, should be so constituted that he could place complete confidence in it. But with imprudent magnanimity he nominated Fabre de l'Aude, Doulcet de Pontécoulant and Roger Ducos, all of whom had voted for the fall; in addition to the old Senators who had not done so, he also appointed one or two Bishops and "old" nobles whom he believed to be "loyal," 61 of his Generals, and 11 of his Chamberlains, imagining he had created a solid foundation for himself. But nearly all these men had adopted the attitude prevalent since the 20th of March, 1815. "What

**The Peers  
Unamenable.**

the Luxembourg feared above all else," wrote Thibaudeau, "was to appear servile."

## CHAMP DE MAI AND THE CHAMBERS

Meanwhile the Chamber of Deputies continued to indulge in demonstrations which served to emphasise its systematic and occasionally offensive opposition. On the 6th of June one of the deputies even went so far as to protest against the oath of loyalty to the régime and to demand its abolition. The Chamber, however, decided that the oath should be obligatory; whereupon the Emperor came to the Palais-Bourbon to hold an "imperial session." The speech he made was resolute though moderate.

### **Napoleon's Speech.**

"It is possible," he declared, "that my first duty as Prince will shortly summon me to lead the nation's children into battle for our beloved country. The Army and I will do our duty. But do you, the Peers and Representatives of France, set the nation an example of confidence, energy and patriotism, and like the Senate of the great men of old, make up your minds to die rather than survive the dishonour and degradation of France. Our country's sacred cause will triumph!" But, according to one eye-witness, this stirring and courageous appeal left the Chamber "somewhat gloomy," and on the very next day a fresh incident occurred. In order to save the time of his Ministers, the Emperor had decided to be represented on the Government bench only by Ministers of State without portfolio. The Chamber protested; all the Ministers ought to attend. "Louis XVI's Ministers," observed Barère sarcastically, "were not such grand gentlemen as Napoleon's and condescended to attend the Assembly." Thus he was met with hostility over anything and everything.

He was terribly depressed by it all. But what must have been his feelings when the Chamber of Peers having, like the Chamber of Deputies, drawn up an address to present to the Emperor, declared that it looked forward "with confidence" to the prospect of a successful campaign, but added that the "nation would then have nothing to fear except the allurements of prosperity and the seductions of victory." It was a warning. Napoleon demanded the suppression of the phrase, but it was merely modified.

### **The Addresses.**

On the 11th the Emperor received the delegations sent by the two Chambers to present the addresses that had been voted. "The struggle in which we are engaged is serious," he replied to the Peers. "The allurements of prosperity do not constitute

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

the danger that menaces us to-day; it is under the Caudine Forks that the foreigner is trying to make us pass." In the case of the deputies, whose address, wonderful to relate, was deferential, he contented himself with uttering a thinly veiled warning on the subject of the ridiculous debates of the preceding days. "The crisis with which we are confronted," he declared, "is extremely serious. Let us beware of imitating the example of the Byzantine Empire which, when it was hard-pressed on all sides by the barbarians, made itself the laughing-stock of posterity by engaging in abstract discussions while the battering-rams were breaking down the city gates."

He was to leave Paris on the following night. On the evening of the 11th he invited all his family to dine with him, and since he could not have his own little son, he kept Hortense's youngest boy, Louis Napoleon, nicknamed *Oui-Oui*, on his knee for a while. Fate had decreed that thirty-seven years later this child should be his sole successor on the imperial Throne. He now seemed more cheerful and confident. During the night he left the Élysée, which he had made his place of residence for the last two months, and a few moments later was tearing along the road to Brussels, which, alas! was also the road to Waterloo.

### **The Farewell Dinner.**

**SOURCES.** *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XXVIII). Lecestre, *Lettres inédites* (II), *Lettres à Fouché* (*Miscellanea Napoleonica*, V). J.-B. Say, *Lettres* (published in the *Journal des Débats*). Paruit (Soldier), *Lettres*. Le Coz, *Correspondance* (II). Memoirs and Recollections by Molé, d'Andigné, Villemain (III), Captain Bertrand, Civrieux, the volunteer Barrès, Baron Sers, Dr. Poumiés de la Siboutie, Broglie, Princess Radziwill, Comte de Malartic, Montbel, Thibaudeau, Plancy, and Barrère. Benjamin Constant, *Journal*.

**WORKS.** Those already mentioned by Sorel (VIII), Driault (V), Madelin (Fouché), Charavay (*La Fayette*), Gautier (*Madame de Staël*), Herriot (*Madame Récamier*), Giraud (*Chateaubriand*), and Lacour-Gayet (*Talleyrand*). Espitalier (*Napoléon et le roi Murat*), Houssaye (1815, II), Masson (*Petites histoires*, second series), Naquet-Radiguet (*L'Acte additionnel*).

## CHAPTER LVIII

### THE BELGIAN CAMPAIGN

The Army on the northern frontier. The "frenzy" of the troops. In Belgium Wellington and Blücher await the arrival of Schwarzenberg on the Rhine. Their contact imperfect. Napoleon aims at separating them. The Allied leaders taken by surprise. Napoleon hurls himself on the Sambre between the two armies. Bourmont's defection. Fighting at Gilly. The arrival of Ney; the Emperor confides his left wing to him; Ney remains inactive. Blücher makes up his mind to deliver battle at Ligny; Ney ordered to take Quatre-Bras and fall back on Blücher's rear. Ligny. The Prussians defeated; Ney opposite Quatre-Bras; his dilatoriness prevents him from capturing the place and causes the failure of the Emperor's most important manœuvre. Grouchy's task. Napoleon advances on Quatre-Bras. Wellington retreats to Mont Saint-Jean. The battlefield of Waterloo. The arrangement of Wellington's troops. Napoleon's plan. Grouchy allows Blücher to slip through his fingers. Napoleon gives the signal for attack. The fighting at Hougomont. Arrival of Bülow. Ney attacks the plateau. Terrific fighting. Grouchy stubbornly refuses to face the guns. Bülow threatens the French flank. Ney in the thick of the fight. A desperate struggle. Napoleon still unwilling to engage his infantry. He decides to do so. The Guard on the plateau with the Emperor. "The Guard is retreating!" Blücher's Prussians arrive. The Guard attacked. The retreat of the "squares." Wellington hurls his army forward. The rout. The meeting of Wellington and Blücher at La Belle-Alliance. Napoleon hastens to Paris.

**I**N a few days' time the Emperor found an extremely fine army concentrated on the northern frontier. It consisted of 200,000 men, all, or nearly all, of whom had been under fire and there was not a man among them who was not aggressively eager for the fray. "To-day, it is not merely enthusiasm," one of Wellington's spies warned him from Paris, "it is frenzy. . . . It will be a sanguinary struggle contested to the bitter end."

#### **The Army in the North.**

"Frenzy!" Yes! That short and tragic campaign of 1815 will always be remembered for the frenzied determination of the

#### **The "Frenzy" of the Troops.**

French troops, who were filled with a maniacal desire for revenge, a sombre joy in once again entering battle under "*Le Tondou*," and an abysmal hatred of the foreigner who had tried to crush France beneath

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

his heel. But a state of frenzy is never very desirable unless it is associated with discipline and confidence. Discipline, however, had been seriously undermined during the critical days of 1814 and 1815, which had left the men with a deep-seated mistrust of their leaders as well as bitter memories of various acts of treachery. "Do not employ the Marshals in the campaign," an anonymous writer had warned the Emperor, and other anonymous denunciations, even of Colonels, had been received from various regiments. "Good God! It has begun again!" exclaimed the men, when they saw Bourmont go over to the enemy at the very opening of hostilities. Nothing can be worse than such a state of mind which inevitably leads to panic; moreover, nothing is more dangerous than the actual "frenzy" itself, which, though it may find expression in superhuman courage, exposes the most heroic fighters to the risk of complete collapse should the tide turn against them.

Napoleon himself was, to all appearances, extremely calm and collected and perfectly clear regarding the plan of action to be adopted. Strange to say, Wellington and Blücher, who had joined

**Bad Contact  
Between  
Wellington  
and Blücher.**

forces for over two months, had taken no trouble to effect a satisfactory liaison. Wellington had concentrated only his own troops round Brussels. Convinced, as a matter of fact, that Napoleon would try to cut him off from the sea, he had sent

part of his army towards the coast, thus weakening his left, which should have kept in touch with Blücher, while the latter, separated from Wellington by the Sambre, was inclined, on the other hand, to bear towards the Meuse, that is to say, to his own left, being on the watch for the arrival of Schwarzenberg's advance guard on the Rhine and having made up his mind to link up with it. Between the English and the Prussians the valley of the Sambre formed a half-open corridor which Napoleon immediately seized upon as the weak spot for which he was looking. It was at this

**Napoleon  
Sees the  
Weak Spot.**

weak spot that he intended to make a lightning attack with his forces concentrated a stone's throw away. He would break Blücher's lines, crush him and drive him back on to the Meuse,

and then turn on Wellington and push him helter-skelter into the sea. As soon as he reached Beaumont, on the evening of the 14th, he gave his orders; in a few hours the whole of his army was

## THE BELGIAN CAMPAIGN

to advance on the Sambre near Charleroi and cut the English off from the Prussians.

They were to be literally taken by surprise. On the very evening when Napoleon was issuing his final orders from Beaumont, Blücher believed him to be still in Paris, whither he hoped to go and drive him out again. "We shall soon enter France," he wrote to his wife on the 14th.

**Blücher's  
Tranquillity.**

"We might stop here a whole year; because Bonaparte will not attack us." Wellington shared his tranquillity, and their attitude explains their failure to make sure of maintaining contact. As a matter of fact, they relied on the excellent means of communication at their disposal to enable them to effect it quickly. For between them ran the magnificent road leading from Namur to Brussels *via* the towns, villages and hamlets which in two days' time were to make history—Sombreffe,, Quatre-Bras, Genappe, Mont-Saint-Jean and Waterloo. But as soon as the Sambre had been crossed everywhere in the region of Charleroi, it was precisely of this road that the Emperor intended, by a surprise attack, to make himself master. This was to be the operation of the 15th.

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Although it was marred by one or two vexatious incidents, it was carried out. Owing to a mistake on the part of Major-General Soult, Vandamme's corps, which had been detailed to force the passage of the Sambre at Charleroi, itself was held up for

**Charleroi  
Bridge  
Captured.**

a long time, but the boldness and initiative of some of the subordinates made up for the delay, with the result that the Prussians were taken by surprise and the bridge at Charleroi captured.

Meanwhile Reille, on the left, had driven back Blücher's advance guard, and, supported by Drouet d'Erlon, had also reached the river up-stream at Marchiennes.

Gérard, who had been detailed to cross the Sambre down-stream at Le Châtelet, was less expeditious. The fact of the matter was

**Bourmont's  
Defection.**

that just as he was marching on Le Châtelet from Philippeville he heard that Bourmont, who was leading his division, had suddenly abandoned it,

and, together with Clouet, his Chief of Staff, and some of the

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

officers, had gone over to the enemy. The old Vendéan chief actually reached the Prussian lines; but Blücher, who was a man of honour, accorded him the reception such treachery deserved. He refused to see the *Hundsfoth*, the dirty devil, as we would say; and the division, indignant at being deserted by its leader, almost mutinied against the remaining officers, all of whom it suspected of treachery and who, in order to calm it, were obliged solemnly to protest their loyalty on oath. Delayed by

**The Sambre  
in French  
Hands.**

these lamentable incidents, Gérard nevertheless succeeded in reaching Le Châtelet, where he crossed the river and joined forces with his comrades. The Sambre was in the hands of

the French.

Ziethen's Prussian corps, driven back from the Sambre on to the Namur-Brussels road, seemed as though it were going to halt at Gilly, near Fleurus, and it was only to be expected that Blücher, on being informed, would hasten with all his forces to its support. Napoleon, foreseeing this, decided, after this preliminary success, to spend the 16th in wiping out the whole Prussian Army. But it was imperative to prevent Wellington from rushing to the rescue of his defenceless ally, and it was necessary for a strong body of troops to hold the famous Namur-Brussels road between Sombreffe, which was in the hands of the Prussians, and Genappe, where the English were installed. The Emperor knew that the important position of Quatre-Bras, half-way between these two places, was undefended; by the Charleroi-Brussels road he could rush troops to this aptly named spot which formed the junction with the Namur-Brussels road. It did not take him a moment to decide; the troops hurried on to this position were to occupy it by the evening of the 15th and hold it against all Wellington's attacks on the following day, so as to allow the

**Ney Ordered  
to Take  
Quatre-Bras.**

main French Army to crush the Prussians. An experienced and energetic leader was required to carry out the operation. Napoleon felt that Ney, for whom he had already sent, and who had just

arrived, was the man, and he forthwith entrusted him with the task, ordering him to advance that same evening, with two army corps, to the cross-roads where the hamlet lay, and take up a strong position there.

## THE BELGIAN CAMPAIGN

But the events of March, 1815, had left their mark on the hot-headed, impetuous dare-devil of old. Among other painful feelings, he now suffered from a sort of nervousness, hitherto unknown to him, which almost amounted to fear. In fact, it must be confessed that this fine soldier was no longer master of himself; but on the evening of that fatal 15th of July Napoleon did not notice this. He thought Ney was eager for the fray and he relied upon him whole-heartedly. This was the first link in the chain of disaster.

### **Ney's Nervousness.**

The Prussians had halted at Gilly only to give Blücher time to collect his forces, and after a few hours of fighting they slipped away and fell back, thoroughly demoralised, on Ligny, where they hoped their old Marshal would come up to the rescue and where Napoleon, for his part, had made up his mind to have done with the "great Blücher" on the following day. But from the very outset, Ney's lieutenants were given the first proofs of that incredible vacillation which was to characterise all his actions for

### **Quatre-Bras Occupied by Weimar.**

the next two days. Quatre-Bras had just been occupied by the British troops under the Duke of Weimar, but they numbered barely 5,000 men, while Ney had 30,000 under his command, and could easily have demolished Weimar in a few seconds. Gneisenau, Blücher's Chief of Staff, afterwards wrote that if Ney had succeeded in making himself master of the position without difficulty, he would have been able not only to hold the English forces but, by falling back on to the rear of the Prussian Army, to have brought about "its complete destruction." The Prince of the Moskva, however, on hearing of the occupation of Quatre-Bras, was overcome by inexplicable fear; he abandoned his advance

### **Ney Fails to Attack.**

and apparently even returned to Charleroi to get fresh instructions. The Emperor, astonished, confined himself to ordering him to carry out on the morning of the 16th the operation he had failed to execute on the evening of the 15th. He thought the mistake could still be rectified, and satisfied, quite justifiably, with the results obtained during the day, felt supremely confident of victory.

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## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

Blücher was collecting all his forces. His aim was to engage the French in the fields round Fleurus and Ligny and prevent them from reaching the Namur-Brussels road at Sombrefte. By means of a violent counter-attack he hoped to drive the Emperor back on to the Sambre and beyond. As for Wellington, who had received the news of the French invasion of Belgium while he was in the middle of dancing and merry-making in Brussels, all he could do was to rush Weimar with all speed to Quatre-Bras and make arrangements to go in full strength to his support. It was this that made the Prince of the Moskva's mistake of the 15th all the more serious and well-nigh irreparable.

Meanwhile Napoleon was making the glorious victory he had promised himself for the 16th ever more dependent upon the occupation of Quatre-Bras; and he arranged for  
**Napoleon's Tactics.** Ney to play an even more important—nay, vital part. As soon as he had made himself master of Quatre-Bras, the Marshal, leaving behind him a force sufficient to hold the English in check for a few hours, was to fall back with from 15,000 to 20,000 of the 45,000 men he had at his disposal, from Quatre-Bras to Sombrefte, where he was to attack Blücher in the rear, the old Prussian having meanwhile been held in a vice by Napoleon further up the road. This would have meant the annihilation of the Prussian Army.

But the early hours of the morning slipped by and still Ney did not move; while he remained inactive, Wellington rushed reinforcements to Quatre-Bras and made arrangements to send more.

By this time, the Prince of the Moskva had made up his mind to advance on Quatre-Bras, but he was incredibly slow and obviously full of doubt and uncertainty.  
**Ney at Last Advances.** Napoleon, who could not possibly have expected such conduct on the part of this fiery and impetuous soldier, had meanwhile engaged the enemy in the fields round Ligny. At midday he went there himself, and gave the signal for attack from Charleroi to Fleurus. His object was to make himself master of all the villages along the banks of the River Ligny, and as soon as he had captured them to drive Blücher back on to the Sombrefte road. Confining himself to one or two demonstrations on his right, he made Gérard launch a vigorous

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attack on Ligny and Vandamme on the villages facing his left wing. While the Prussians were thus held in check Ney was to have come up in the rear and delivered the knock-out blow. In order to make sure that the Marshal thoroughly understood what was expected of him, he sent Soult to him with further formal and extremely explicit instructions.

The attack on the villages along the river bank was met with stubborn resistance by the inhabitants. Eventually Vandamme's

**Vandamme  
Captures Some  
Villages.**

troops succeeded in capturing them, which meant that the Prussians had been outflanked on their right. Meanwhile, on another part of the field, Gérard's corps, after a ding-dong fight, succeeded

in the centre in capturing part of Ligny, where a terrific hand-to-hand struggle took place. The Emperor was not alarmed by the desperate resistance put up by the Prussians; it served his purpose, since it kept Blücher up the road where the Prince of the Moskva was to appear like a bolt from the blue and take him in the rear. "If Ney carries out my orders properly," the Emperor observed to Gérard, "not a single gun belonging to that army will escape." As he did not hear the

**Ney Sent  
Further  
Urgent Orders.**

Marshal's guns, he despatched Forbin-Janson, one of his aides-de-camp, to give him further urgent instructions. But, to make doubly sure,

he sent orders to Drouet d'Erlon, who was in command of the army corps nearest Ney's small force, to fall back on his right on to the village of Braye, so as to attack the Prussian right flank while awaiting the arrival of Ney himself.

Meanwhile Blücher, who now had his hands full, was trying to extricate himself by means of a counter-attack, and was hurling fresh forces against the villages which had fallen into the hands of the French. But as soon as it was launched, this counter-attack was repulsed by the stubborn resistance put up by the enemy, and the Prussians were driven back with heavy losses. Thus the Emperor had good reason to suppose his foe had been sufficiently weakened to enable him to deal Blücher the knock-out blow himself, for to his intense surprise there were no signs either of Ney or of Drouet d'Erlon.

As a matter of fact, he was bitterly disappointed that neither

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of them had come up, and while he had hoped to catch the enemy between two fires, he now decided merely to break his line. The imperial Guard hurled from Ligny against the Prussian front spread panic right and left. "The effect was dramatic," Soult afterwards wrote to Davout. The Prussian line was broken and the army was driven helter-skelter in a mad whirl back on to the road. Blücher tried to repulse his assailants, himself leading the cavalry charge; but surprised by a counter-attack on the part of the French cavalry, he was knocked down together with his charger under the very hoofs of the enemy's horses. The aged Marshal must indeed have been a man of iron to have escaped death. In the ding-dong of the fight, one of his aides-de-camp, who had seen him fall, came to the rescue and carried him in a faint from the battlefield looking more dead than alive. Gneisenau, who thought he had been killed or taken prisoner, assumed command and ordered a retreat; it was carried out in a state of semi-panic. On the following day 8,000 desperate fugitives were rounded up as far afield as Liège and even Aix-la-Chapelle!

**Napoleon Disappointed.** The Prussian Army, which had lost over 12,000 men, and owing to the effects of this panic had actually been weakened to the extent of 25,000, was now, moreover, completely cut off from the English forces.

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Nevertheless, the Emperor was displeased. Not only had Ney failed to carry out his instructions but, as the result of some incredible aberration, had also prevented Drouet d'Erlon from executing the orders he had been given.

Having advanced inconceivably slowly on Quatre-Bras, the Marshal had reached the position so late that he found it far more strongly defended than it had been originally. And he had launched the attack itself so half-heartedly that Wellington, who had rushed up, was able, with the help of reinforcements, to hold his ground, after a few trifling rebuffs. In order to support Reille's corps in the attack Ney summoned Drouet d'Erlon;

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but just at that moment the latter was recalled by the Emperor, and, in obedience to orders, immediately bore down on the Prussian right. The Prince of the Moskva, who all the morning had given everybody about him the impression of being utterly at sea, had the temerity to send Drouet d'Erlon peremptory orders to return to him immediately, and, unfortunately, the latter

**Ney Attacks** complied. Meanwhile, to justify his incredible  
**Quatre-Bras.** behaviour, he at last made an effort to capture

Quatre-Bras; but it was mere theatrical display and he did not even wait for the forces he had recalled. Forbin-Janson had just arrived with urgent instructions from Napoleon, but Ney refused to carry them out and launched his cavalry in a mad charge against positions which were now almost impregnable, with the result that, after a few hours, he found himself repulsed with heavy losses. Although he received fresh instructions from Napoleon, he persisted in disregarding them and repeated the attack on Quatre-Bras. He was again repulsed and having been driven out even from the positions he had captured at first, was obliged to resign himself to falling back. Thus, entirely through his own fault, he had failed in the task allotted to him, and,

**Ney Forced** worse still, had spoilt the magnificent manœuvre  
**to Retire.** planned by Napoleon, the manœuvre which, by bringing him on the Prussian rear, might have dealt Blücher the knock-out blow and made the Battle of Ligny so decisive a victory that it would have taken its place beside Austerlitz in the annals of history.

Disappointed though he was by this indecisive victory, Napoleon felt he could at least hurl himself on Wellington's army without fear of intervention by the defeated Prussian forces. Blücher had just received what the English leader had no hesitation in dubbing "a damned good hiding," and it seemed likely that for some days at least his army would be *hors de combat*. All that Napoleon asked was forty-eight hours in which to have done with the English. Unfortunately, it was impossible for him to use all his forces for the attack; since the Prussians, though defeated, had not been annihilated, prudence demanded that they should be watched and held in check in case Blücher, even if it meant making a wide detour, should attempt to join the British forces with the remnants of his army. The Emperor

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accordingly detached 30,000 men from his army and placed them under the command of Grouchy, whom he had recently presented with a Marshal's baton, telling him to pursue the forces defeated at Ligny, and if they showed signs of making in the direction of Brussels, to outflank and stop them. The choice of Grouchy was unfortunate. An excellent cavalry leader, he had no experience of high command. Moreover, Napoleon was also depriving himself of his cavalry leader and we shall see the disastrous consequences for which this strange omission was to be responsible.

In addition to this twofold mistake, the Emperor was also guilty of another. Without any apparent reason he continued to linger on the battlefield of Ligny. Having determined, with the remainder of his forces, to join the wretched Ney on the Charleroi-Brussels road, and if Wellington came up with his whole army to engage him, he should have hurried there as quickly as possible on the morning of the 17th. But Wellington, on hearing of Blücher's defeat, foresaw Napoleon's intention, and decided to abandon the position and move further north to find a better one.

**Wellington  
Abandons  
Quatre-Bras.**

Gneisenau had just informed him that the Prussian Army was about to move towards Wavre, in the direction of Brussels, and thus Wellington was forced to fall back in order to be within reach of his allies should they attempt to join him on the following day.

If, on that morning, Ney had obeyed Napoleon's fresh instructions, and resolutely advanced on the English, he would have been able to prevent their retreat and deliver them into the Emperor's hands. This is proved by the fact that the French cavalry, although they were sent very late in pursuit of the English, succeeded, in spite of the delay, in hampering them considerably. The weather was stormy; it had begun to rain and the roads had become heavy. The English cavalry, protecting Wellington's rear, began to flounder in the mud, and Uxbridge, who was in command, implored them to hasten. "Faster! Faster!

**Wellington's  
New  
Position.**

For God's sake!" he exclaimed, "Gallop or you will all be taken!" This retreat, with the French in close pursuit, continued until Mont-Saint-Jean was reached. Here Wellington made his army take up its position under a downpour of rain, followed by a thick

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fog; and it was here, in front of the Forest of Soignes, that the issue was to be decided.

The Emperor, having discovered his adversary's intentions, weighed all the possibilities. The arrival of the Prussians on his flank seemed to him hardly likely; but it was possible and he had to be prepared for it. He accordingly sent immediate orders to Grouchy to approach the Dyle so as to protect the French right wing from any possibility of attack by the Prussians.

He was quite right to provide for this. For, the moment he had recovered and resumed command, **Blücher** with his usual determination, forthwith marched **Evades** his forces in the direction of Brussels, while **Grouchy**, having allowed him to slip through his fingers, was very slow to set off in pursuit.

\* \* \* \* \*

Between Genappe, on the south, and the Forest of Soignes, on the north, lie two plateaux, that of La Belle-Alliance and that of Mont-Saint-Jean, separated by a shallow depression formed by two little valleys, the one facing east and the other west, and joined by a low ridge along which the famous highway runs. The one on the east is the Smohain valley, through which flows the

**Description of the Battlefield.** Ohain rivulet, a tributary of the Dyle; the one on the west is the Braine-l'Alleud valley, whose waters run down to the Senne. Half-way up the slope of the Mont-Saint-Jean plateau the Braine-l'Alleud-Ohain road runs east and west and crosses the main highway. In 1815 it formed a sort of natural trench. The plateau reaches its highest point at Mont-Saint-Jean, after which it slopes gently down towards the village of Waterloo, where, on the outskirts of the Forest of Soignes, Wellington had set up his headquarters. Hence the somewhat inappropriate name by which one of the most famous battles in history will always be known. As a matter of fact, Waterloo played no part in it. For various reasons the plateau constituted an excellent defensive position, and strategists are right in praising the English Field-Marshal for having chosen it. The position, which was already perfect, was also flanked by bastions built at the foot of the slopes

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—from west to east, the Château d'Hougoumont, then a little higher up the farm of La Haie-Sainte, and lastly, still further east, the farms of Papelotte and La Haye. In the direction of the village of Smohain the valley turns towards the heights of La Chapelle-Saint-Guibert, which separate it from the Dyle. Between Genappe and Wavre, this rivulet winds round the east side of this little range of hills, and one of its small tributaries, the Lasne, leads up-stream to the village of Plancenoît, situated on the very slope of La Belle-Alliance hill on which Napoleon took up his position.

It was on this side that Wellington, on receiving Gneisenau's information, awaited the Prussians. His one object was to maintain his foothold on the plateau until Blücher's arrival, and merely hold the enemy until the latter was attacked on the flank by the Prussians and, caught between two fires, could be annihilated.

### **Arrangement of Wellington's Forces.**

He arranged his forces so as to take full advantage of the accidents of the ground, placing his main strength on the right, in the hope that in due course the Prussians would come up and support his left, which was rather weak.

But vital though the occasion was, Napoleon, to use Henry Houssaye's expression, appeared to "disdain manœuvring."

### **Napoleon's Plan.**

His aim was to capture the above-mentioned "bastions," and then launch a vigorous attack on the all too weak English left; having thrown it into confusion and pierced the centre, he would drive Wellington to bay in the Forest of Soignes, at that time very badly served with roads, and turn the defeat into a rout. Reille, on the French left, was to attack Hougoumont, and Drouet d'Erlon, on the right, was to capture the farms. In his centre the Emperor had stationed a battery of eighty guns to wipe out the enemy's artillery, against which, in due course, he would launch his reserves. With this object he was keeping Lobau's corps, together with Kellermann's and Milhaud's cuirassiers, in the second line, while the formidable Guard was further in the rear.

It was late in the day before the battle opened. Finding the ground swamped by the downpour of the previous evening, Napoleon held a consultation with Drouot, who advised him to wait till midday—a decision for which the latter never forgave

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himself. Moreover, the Emperor had good grounds for thinking that Grouchy, after having cut off the Prussian retreat, would soon come up to support the French right and play a part in the victory; it was necessary to give him time to carry out the orders he had been given. Thus, while believing the delay would enable Grouchy to join him in time to be of use, he was really all unwittingly favouring Blücher.

**Napoleon  
Waits for  
Grouchy.**

As a matter of fact, Grouchy, losing hour after hour, had allowed Blücher to slip through his fingers and with his four corps reach Wavre, whence quite early in the morning he had sent Bülow towards Chapelle-Saint-Guibert with orders to make for Plancenoit, close on Napoleon's flank, while the other corps were to march, *via* the Ohain road, to the rescue of the English left. If Grouchy had hastened his march during the morning of

**Grouchy  
Delays.**

the 18th, he might still have fallen upon the Prussians on the road. But although he was already a long way behind Blücher, he dawdled at Gembloux, while the despatch which had been sent him that morning was delayed in Major-General Soult's quarters, and only reached him very late. Meanwhile the Prussians were marching unmolested at lightning speed straight on the French flank.

At half-past eleven Napoleon, from his headquarters at La Belle-Alliance, gave the signal to open fire, and after half an hour's bombardment the infantry attacked.

**The Battle  
Opens.**

\* \* \* \* \*

With the object of deceiving Wellington regarding his real intentions, the Emperor made a feint of concentrating on the English right, and sent the whole of Reille's corps against Hougomont. Having captured the woods surrounding the castle, the first division, commanded by ex-King Jerome, attacked the building itself, which was stoutly defended, and wore itself out in fruitless assaults. The Emperor was not unduly perturbed by this, for, as we know, he intended to make his supreme effort elsewhere, on the enemy's left. He was on the point of launching a vigorous attack on it when he was informed that a "big black cloud" had

**Reille Attacks  
Hougomont.**



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appeared on his right. It was Bülow's corps, from Blücher's army, and the sudden menace had to be met *instantanément*. To deal with it,

**Bülow Arrives.** Napoleon detached Lobau's corps, which, with two cavalry divisions, was to hold this first Prussian corps for the necessary length of time.

At last he had received news of Grouchy, who had left Gembloux much too late to cut off the Prussians but might be able to make up enough ground at least to fall on Bülow's rear and catch him between two fires. Through Soult, Napoleon sent another despatch urging Grouchy to march direct to the field of battle.

At half-past one, thinking this was settled, he resumed the attack on the plateau towards the enemy's left. The first objective was the farm of La Haie-Sainte; after capturing it the French right was to deploy, scale the hill, and seize the famous Ohain road, and falling on the English left, was to annihilate it, take the enemy's centre in the rear, capture Mont-Saint-Jean and drive Wellington's army in discomfiture towards Waterloo and the Forest of Soignes. Drouet d'Erlon was rushed to the attack, which

**Ney Attacks La Haie-Sainte.** was led by Ney himself, whose primary aim was to seize La Haie-Sainte. He took the approaches to it, but, as had been the case at Hougomont, he found himself confronted by strongly defended buildings on which, for the moment, he could make no impression.

Meanwhile Drouet d'Erlon, leaving Ney to continue his mad assaults, had made direct for the Ohain road. This natural trench, hollowed out half-way up the slope, was strongly held, but with magnificent spirit the French troops succeeded in capturing it. Just as they had crossed the road and were making for the top of the ridge which was covered with a regular sea of rye and wheat, however, there suddenly rose up out of this ocean of corn the Scotch troops under Pack and Picton; charging unexpectedly, they threw Drouet d'Erlon's first line into confusion. In its retreat it fell into the arms of the advancing second line, and spreading terror, involved all who were behind in a disorderly

**The Scots Charge.** flight, while the Scots hurled themselves on to the broken ranks shouting: "Charge! Charge! Hurrah!" and drove them back helter-skelter to the bottom of the hill. The Scots, carried along by their own impetus, were already threatening to gain a foothold on La Belle-Alliance plateau

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itself and had overwhelmed the first French batteries, when Napoleon hurled one of Milhaud's cavalry brigades against them and drove them back on to the opposite slopes. Altogether 3,000 men had fallen in this desperate scuffle; but for the French it meant starting again from the very beginning. The Prussians were advancing on their right, and Napoleon had just received a despatch from Grouchy informing him that he was still somewhere between Gembloux and Wavre and referring to the manœuvre he intended to carry out "on the following day." In spite of the urgent and even violent entreaties of Gérard, his second-in-

**Grouchy  
Makes for  
Wavre.**

command, Grouchy, although he could hear the roar of the guns, had actually persisted in marching quite slowly, not in the direction of Mont-Saint-Jean, but towards Wavre, whence the Prussians had already set out for the field of battle.

The Emperor began to feel the liveliest apprehensions. Blücher, whom Grouchy had allowed to slip through his fingers, would arrive before many hours had passed; whether he stopped fighting or not, he would before nightfall have two armies on his hands. It would be better to drive Wellington back before Blücher could reach him.

But Lobau was already being hard pressed by Bülow and gradually retreating on Plancenoît. The menace had become acute with the enemy close in the rear.

\* \* \* \* \*

While Reille was still hurling himself in vain against Hougoumont, Ney had at last succeeded in capturing La Haie-Sainte.

**La Haie-  
Sainte  
Captured.**

He was overjoyed and lost his head. Anxious to atone for his mistakes of the previous day, he made up his mind to take the battle in hand, to conduct it and win it by himself; and while Napoleon, perturbed by Bülow's advance, was anxious to deal with him first, Ney, without waiting for orders, took the initiative and resumed the desperate struggle on the plateau.

**Ney Attacks  
the Plateau.**

But, at all times a mediocre strategist, and at this particular moment quite beside himself, he expected to carry all before him by means of mad cavalry charges

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directed against troops on whom nothing as yet had made any serious impression. He asked the Emperor for squadrons, and by his persistence extracted Milhaud's cuirassiers from him and forthwith hurled them against Wellington. On seeing this magnificent body of cavalry charge, the whole army imagined that the decisive hour had struck and loud shouts of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" rent the air. But it was sadly mistaken. The Emperor was still biding his time, and holding back the bulk of his cavalry until the artillery and the infantry had accomplished their task.

As bad luck would have it, Milhaud, passing the light horse belonging to the Guard, caught sight of Lefebvre-Desnouettes, who was in command of them. "I am going to attack!" he shouted. "Come and support me!" Lefebvre, thinking the order came from the Emperor, rushed his cavalry up behind Milhaud. It was now

**Mad Cavalry Charges.** that the lack of a good cavalry leader made itself felt—Grouchy, for instance, in the absence of

Murat. Ney having more or less usurped command of them, they charged anyhow without precise instructions, not knowing what they were aiming at or what they were expected to do. The Prince of the Moskva was foolish enough to imagine that he could carry Mont-Saint-Jean with the help of the cavalry alone. But Wellington had just heavily reinforced his front and was prepared to meet any assaults, with the result that Ney's attack, confined to the cavalry, was met by a wall of steel.

Such was the fury of the charge, however, that at first the front enemy line looked as though it had been mown down. But already fatigued by this initial effort, the troops were confronted by the second line, on which Milhaud failed to make any impression, whereupon Ney did not hesitate to hurl Lefebvre-Desnouettes into the scrimmage. The English cavalry, in its turn, now came

**The English Cavalry in Action.** into play. Launched against the French horse, safely held by the stout British infantry, it forced them to give way, and driving them back, made them retreat to the slopes of the plateau. Milhaud

and Lefebvre-Desnouettes, having re-formed, charged again, and, by means of a magnificent counter-attack, in their turn drove back the English cavalry under Uxbridge, once more reached the Eng-

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lish infantry, broke through several lines and seemed really to be threatening Mont-Saint-Jean. It was magnificent, but insensate. However, at that moment more than one Englishman thought the game was up. "I'm afraid it's all over!" exclaimed Colonel Gould.

From La Belle-Alliance, Napoleon, a prey to anxiety, had been watching this extravagant and sublime display. "It is a premature movement," he observed to Soult, "which may have dire results."—"The wretch!" he added, referring to Ney; "it is the second time since the day before yesterday that he has compromised the fate of France!" But it was too late; the die had been cast! The cavalry, having regained a footing on the plateau, seemed on the point of breaking the British resistance. It was impossible to leave such heroes in the lurch. Ney, mad with excitement, was shouting victory, but demanding yet more cavalry. Extremely reluctantly Napoleon sent him Kellermann's 3,000 cuirassiers, whom without further ado the Marshal cast into the furnace where the rest were rapidly melting away.

Wellington awaited this fresh avalanche perfectly calmly, and continued to pile up reinforcements on his front. Meanwhile the French cavalry, charging again, had pierced his front line, overwhelmed his second and were falling on his third. At last alarmed by this prodigious thrust, he again sent his cavalry into action, but they, too, were driven back and temporarily scattered. Then suddenly the mad atmosphere shed by Ney over the plateau

### **The Guard's Cavalry Charge.**

seemed to spread and carry everybody away; the cavalry of the Guard, seeing their comrades breaking through everywhere, rushed without waiting for orders to their support. In vain did Bertrand, hurriedly despatched by the horrified Emperor, attempt to recall them. They hurled themselves against the third English line, which stood firm. A mad charge such as this should have been backed by infantry; but for the last hour Ney seemed completely oblivious of the fact that, close at hand, there were 6,000 bayonets at last set free by the capture of Hougomont. He remembered them only after the fourth charge. But it was too late! The French cavalry, its strength, if not its heroism, completely exhausted, was being cut to pieces by the desperate resistance of

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the third enemy line. Ney seemed to have lost his head completely. As he passed by Drouet d'Erlon, he shouted, "Hold on! If we're not killed here, you and I will be hanged by the *émigrés*!" The cry revealed the secret of his maddened soul.

**Ney's  
Despair.**

Wellington had re-formed his lines; the French squadrons, reduced to shreds, had returned to the edge of the plateau, when a sudden hush fell. An intense feeling of lassitude on both sides made the battle fizzle out for a moment at this point.

\* \* \* \* \*

But it continued to rage elsewhere. "Infantry!" exclaimed the Emperor to the envoy, when Ney took it into his head to demand infantry. "Where does he expect me to get infantry? You see what I have on my hands!" He was referring to the Prussians who were menacing his flank. For Lobau, under the terrific pressure to which he had been exposed, had been obliged to fall back, fighting the while, with the result that the Prussians had reached

**The Old  
Guard in  
Action.**

Plancenoît, almost immediately behind La Belle Alliance. The Emperor hurled eleven battalions of the Old Guard against them and in less than half an hour they had recaptured the village and

driven back the enemy. But this afforded merely a respite; behind Bülow the approach of Blücher's main army could be felt.

There was only one means of preventing disaster before the Prussians arrived in full force, and that was to make a final desperate attempt to take the plateau. As nothing had been seen or heard of Grouchy, it was impossible to wait any longer. And the Emperor, massing the whole Guard, placed himself at

**The Emperor  
Leads the  
Guard.**

their head. Gloomy, but calm and resolute, he, in his turn, marched with them on the fatal plateau. But just as he was scaling the slopes, desperate cries were heard to the right of the

firing. Durutte's division, having taken the farms of La Papelotte and La Haie on the English left, had been panic-stricken on seeing Blücher's advance guards approaching from that direction, and had given way.

The Emperor halted the Guard at La Haie-Sainte, went himself to the fugitives, led them back to their positions, and then

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returned to his own men. Having met Ney, who shouted to him that if he had some infantry he felt sure he could still carry all before him, he gave him four of his battalions, and keeping only two himself, also gave four to Friant. The Guard, to all appearance calm and collected, advanced firmly and resolutely,

### **A Disgraceful Act of Treachery.**

but at this moment a disgraceful incident occurred; and as Bourmont had deserted at the opening of hostilities, the Belgian campaign was, as it were, sandwiched between two acts of treachery.

Suddenly a Captain of the carabineers was seen to gallop headlong towards the enemy, shouting, "*Vive le Roi!*". On being received in the English ranks he warned them to hold themselves in readiness. "The b——r and his Guards will be on you in less than half an hour!" he exclaimed. Wellington thereupon strengthened his whole line and ordered his gunners to concentrate their fire on the Guard as it advanced. Hitherto perfectly cool and collected, he was now consumed with anxiety; having reinforced his lines, he had no reserves left. "Let them all die," he said in reply to the demand of his lieutenants for yet more men.

### **Wellington's Reserves Exhausted.**

"I have no more reserves to give them." When Hill asked for orders he told him they must hold out to the last man, if necessary, so as to give

the Prussians time to come up.

The situation called for a sudden mass attack by the Guard, led by the Emperor himself, against the English front. But Ney attacked first, and then Friant. And once again, as had happened two hours previously, the British infantry, who had been crouching in the corn, rose up as one man and fired. The Guard's battalions, mown down, fell back. "The Guard is retreating!" The cry

### **"The Guard Is Retreat- ing!"**

ran like a long-drawn wail through the French lines. The two solid battalions that still surrounded the Emperor continued to advance,

however, ready to receive their comrades into their ranks and lead them back to the assault. But, once again, a terrible commotion was seen on the French right. The whole of Ziethen's Prussian corps—20,000 men—was debouching from Smohain and joining up with the British left, and the English squadrons,

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which Durutte was holding with difficulty, immediately fell upon him and broke the whole of the French line on the right. Meanwhile Ziethen was advancing in the direction of Mont-Saint-Jean, ready to take the French in the rear.

**Ziethen  
Advances.**

It was the *coup de grâce*

\* \* \* \* \*

It was eight o'clock; night was falling and putting an end to this interminable day just as the French defeat was becoming pronounced. Already, galloping ahead of Ziethen, the Prussian cavalry was falling on the Guard's flank at the very moment when, led by the Emperor, it was being attacked by the English horse who, after driving back Durutte on the French right, had turned against their centre. The Emperor made his battalions

**The Retreat  
of the  
"Squares."**

form squares and gave the order to retreat. The retreat might have been carried out in good order and without too heavy losses if the Emperor had still had his cavalry. But Ney had destroyed it.

He had only 300 horse to cover him as he fell back. And time was pressing; for owing to the gap created on the French right, the bulk of the Prussian Army, under Blücher, was marching, not on Mont-Saint-Jean but on La Belle-Alliance itself, ready to intercept the retreat. Panic—"frenzy" having now turned to despair—was beginning to break out in the remnants of the hapless French Army; all that remained of their cavalry, having left the plateau at first in good order, now began to rush helter-skelter towards La Belle-Alliance, dragging with them the remains of Reille's and Drouet d'Erlon's corps, which had been decimated.

Whereupon Wellington gave the signal for his whole army to follow in pursuit. It advanced in mass formation, to a flourish of trumpets, entirely submerging the last islets of French troops and inundating the little valley between the two plateaux.

**Wellington  
Pursues.**

The Guard had managed to reach this valley, but was literally swamped in it. It was assailed on all sides by floods of assailants, "like a wild boar, driven to bay, surrounded by the howling

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pack," as Henry Houssaye puts it. One of the squares, completely surrounded, was summoned to surrender. The story goes that Cambronne retorted with a coarse expletive. But in all probability the famous monosyllable was spat out by a thousand tongues at once. The foul-mouthed curse meant much the same as the fine phrase afterwards coined by the poet. Ney, displaying every sign of madness, had come down from the plateau in the centre of other squares. "Come and see how a Marshal of France dies!" he shouted. As for the Emperor, he was making his way, perfectly calm and collected, though with despair in his heart, surrounded by the first regiment of Grenadiers. The sullen determination of these heroes, who felt that their idol was in their safe-keeping, was terrible to behold. They formed a live wall about him that nothing could touch.

The Prussians were swarming over La Belle-Alliance and it had to be abandoned; it was not until he reached Genappe, at eleven o'clock at night, that the Emperor left the square of Grenadiers that survived intact to the end.

At that very hour Wellington and Blücher met near La Belle-Alliance. Out of courtesy the Prussian trumpets blared out *God Save the King*; but they were drowned by forty thousand German voices singing Luther's Choral.

The English declaring themselves exhausted, Blücher undertook the pursuit. But his men, too, were tired; and the very spectacle of the French rout, though it reassured them, also warned them not to drive the vanquished foe to make a last desperate stand. The French Army, cut to pieces, was, however, utterly incapable of doing so. From the heights of heroism it had descended to the depths of demoralisation and was melting away like snow in the sun. Napoleon despaired of stopping it before Charleroi. Had he felt sure of Paris, he would probably have decided to wait there and collect the 40,000 or 50,000 men who had escaped the disaster. But he knew that at the first news of the defeat everything would probably fall to pieces in the capital. He accordingly handed over to Jerome the distracted remnants of his wretched army with



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orders to re-form at Laon, and taking a post-chaise, hurried to Paris. He had already sent two letters to Joseph, one to be read to the Council and the other private and confidential, in which he made no attempt to conceal the whole truth; and he drafted the bulletin of the "Battle of Mont-Saint-Jean," which, though "so glorious for the armies of France," had eventually "ended in disaster." He could guess all the intrigues to which this avowal would give rise, and hoped by his immediate return to the capital to forestall or put an end to them. He would take all the necessary steps there to secure the public safety, and then return to Laon, order fresh levies to be raised, and again place himself at the head of his new army to face the invasion. But if he was still relying on his own energy to overcome the obstacles with which he would be confronted, he was sadly mistaken; for, contrary to his expectations, this very energy, too sorely tried and buffeted, was to betray him even more surely than the hand of man.

**Napoleon  
Hastens to  
Paris.**

SOURCES. *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XXVIII). Wellington's Despatches (XII). Colomb, *Blücher in Briefen*. Grouchy, *Relation succincte*. Muffling, *Aus meinem Leben*. King Jerome's Memoirs. Memoirs and Reminiscences by Civrieux, General Petlet, Gourgaud, and Larrey. *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*. Jomini, *La campagne de 1815*. Clausewitz, *Der Feldzug von 1815*. Bertin, *Précis des batailles de Fleurus et de Waterloo*.

WORKS. H. Houssaye, *1815: Waterloo* (most important). Masson, *Jadis* (I). Seryeix, *Drouot*. Cambronne. Grouchy, *Le maréchal Grouchy*. La Bédoyère, *Ney*. Gautherot, *Bourmont*.

## CHAPTER LIX

### THE SECOND ABDICATION

The news of Waterloo reaches Paris. Joseph summons the Council. Fouché's efforts to turn the Chamber against the Emperor and overthrow the Council. The Emperor's arrival. His plans. The interminable Council of the 21st of June. Regnaud advises abdication. The session in the Palais-Bourbon; La Fayette on the rostrum; the Chamber declares itself inviolable. Despair in the Élysée. The crowd acclaims the Emperor. Regnaud in the Chamber; the latter demands abdication. Lucien sent with the Ministers to the Palais-Bourbon; La Fayette's violent retort to Lucien. The Chamber appoints a Commission to deliberate with the Ministers. The question of abdication raised by the Commission. Better news of the Army; Davout entrusted with the task of conveying it to the Chamber; the latter, quite indifferent, demands immediate abdication. Napoleon at first rebels at the idea but eventually dictates his abdication in favour of his son. The Duke of Otranto entrusted with the task of conveying the act to the Palais-Bourbon and Carnot to the Luxembourg. The Chambers, instead of appointing a Regency Council, nominate a Government Commission. Fouché keeps La Fayette out of it. Napoleon receives the delegations from the Chambers. He feels sure that his son will not be accepted.

**I** AM not nearly so anxious about the military operations as I am about the behaviour of the Chamber," Sismondi had written as early as the 17th of June; yet he was hand in glove with the "constitutionals!" And indeed, as soon as the Emperor's back was turned, the futile mistrust of the Chamber had become accentuated. "It is entirely out of the Emperor's control," Barante had already observed. "But," he added, "what does it want? What is it aiming at? It is impossible to say." Fouché was nursing it, awaiting the opportunity to use it for his own ends.

Joseph received the Emperor's letters on the 20th. He immediately convoked the Council and made no attempt to conceal the disaster. After a "mournful silence," Cambacérès reported to Molé, one or two plans were discussed; Carnot and Davout maintained that a Dictatorship of the Public Safety should be conferred upon the Emperor. Fouché said nothing.

**The News of  
Waterloo  
Reaches  
Paris.**

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Through his own private channels he had been informed of the disaster as early as the evening of the 19th, and had had time to lay his guns. If the Emperor, on his return, dissolved the Chamber and seized the dictatorship, he knew that he himself was lost. Certain hints Napoleon had let drop on the eve of his departure had left him in no doubt on that score. He was therefore anxious for the Chamber to forestall the Emperor and, warned of the danger threatening it, to denounce any attempt at dissolution as a *coup d'état*. He would have liked it to insist on the Emperor's abdication; but doubtless the latter would be able to hold his own. The only alternative was for Napoleon to be brought to contemplate abdication on the advice of friends hitherto devoted to

### **Fouché's Intrigues.**

him, and thus be prepared to yield to the pressure of the Palais-Bourbon. Fouché accordingly turned to Regnaud de Saint-Jean-d'Angély, whom the Master quite rightly regarded as a staunch supporter of the dynasty. For some days past the Minister of Police had noticed his colleague's confidence being undermined by his daily intercourse, as a Minister of State, with the hostile Chamber; and he felt it was imperative for him, before the Emperor's arrival, to stir La Fayette to such a pitch of excitement that he would incite the Chamber to rebel and to drill Regnaud into discouraging his master.

The Duke of Otranto had a very low opinion of La Fayette's gifts as a statesman. "What do you think of that old imbecile?" he asked a friend shortly afterwards. "Have you ever met such an idiot?" After making use of him he fully intended to fool him and cast him off like the rest; having thus paved the way to a second Bourbon restoration, he would reap the reward. On the 20th he accordingly summoned "the old friend of liberty,"

### **Fouché and La Fayette.**

informed him of the disaster, and warned him that the Emperor would return, with the inevitable result that the Chamber would be dissolved and that "madman" become Dictator. La Fayette immediately rushed to the Palais-Bourbon, where the lobbies were soon buzzing with the most sinister rumours. Regnaud was a different proposition and Fouché handled him accordingly. The Emperor's cause, he assured him, was lost, but there might still be hope for the dynasty and the régime. If Napoleon persisted in remaining

## THE SECOND ABDICATION

on the throne he would compromise his son's future, but if he could be persuaded to abdicate, he would secure his son's succession and, once and for all, keep out the Bourbons. Regnaud did not take long to convince, and by the evening of the 20th Fouché had completed his preparations for catching the lion in his toils.

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At eight o'clock on the morning of the 21st the post-chaise drew up in front of the Élysée and the Emperor hurriedly alighted. Caulaincourt was awaiting him in tears—the worst person in the world to cheer him. Napoleon looked utterly worn out and exhausted. "The Army performed miracles," he declared in broken tones; "but it was seized with panic. All is lost! Ney behaved like a madman; he had all my cavalry cut to pieces! I am done! I must have a couple of hours' rest before I can get to business." . . . "I am choking!" he muttered.

**The  
Emperor's  
Return.**

He went straight to his bathroom and stopped there. He was still in his bath when the Ministers arrived and he received Davout there. Davout advised the immediate prorogation of the Chambers, declaring that the implacable hostility of the Chamber of Representatives would paralyse all loyalty. Later on Napoleon reproached himself for not having followed this courageous advice. "There is no denying it," he confessed. "I did not have the pluck to do it." But he was unfair to himself. It was not a matter of "pluck," and the explanation he added was justified. "It would have meant a reign of terror," he declared, "and I hated the thought of it." He was still in the same frame of mind as he had been in the spring of the year; if the Chambers resisted he would have to rely on the populace against them, to play "the King of the Mob," and perhaps let loose the flood of civil war. On the morning of the 21st he preferred to console himself with the idea that, since "the majority were well-disposed and French," he would be able to save the Assembly from the influence of his enemies. "Only La Fayette and one or two others are against me," he observed. As a matter of fact, he had no wish to go through Brumaire again; in fact, he hardly felt he had the right.

**Davout's  
Advice.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

The Council had assembled and was awaiting him. A discussion was held and Carnot advised a dictatorship, though somewhat simple-mindedly insisted that it should be conferred by the Chambers. Caulaincourt, Cambacérès and Maret also talked about "an agreement with the Chambers." Davout did not believe that any such agreement was possible; the Chambers would have to be prorogued and, if necessary, the Chamber of Deputies dissolved. Lucien, who throughout this crisis constantly revealed himself once more the man of Brumaire, supported the Marshal; he was ready to go to the length of using armed force against any attempt at parliamentary opposition. All eyes were turned to Fouché, who, impassive and inscrutable, his ashen features forming an impenetrable mask to his thoughts, was present throughout these hectic discussions. When he was eventually called upon, he had the effrontery to support Carnot's advice, which he was fully aware was utterly futile; the Chambers should be asked to confer the dictatorship. Thus he created a sort of alibi for himself. He was waiting for Regnaud, whom he had duly primed, to cut into the wound. The Minister of State, convinced by the arch-rogue, was determined to be frank, if necessary brutally frank. "I very much doubt," he declared, "whether the representatives will consent to support the Emperor's views. Apparently they are of opinion that he is no longer the man to save the country. I am afraid a great sacrifice may be necessary." The Emperor, who, until that moment, had allowed everybody's opinions to be expressed, fixed his gaze upon him.

**The  
Interminable  
Council of  
June 21st.**

**Regnaud  
Advices  
Abdication.**

"Say what you mean, Regnaud," he exclaimed. "It is my abdication they want."—"I am afraid so, Sire," was the Minister's firm reply, "and however painful it may be for me, it is my duty to enlighten Your Majesty. I would even add that if the Emperor refused to offer his abdication the Chamber might have the effrontery to demand it." Napoleon was dumfounded; he had complete faith in Regnaud's loyalty. But Lucien lost his temper; the Emperor "must do without the Chambers, proclaim himself Dictator and summon all good Frenchmen to the rescue."

Napoleon made no reply either to Regnaud or to Lucien, but professed still to believe that the deputies chosen by France to

## THE SECOND ABDICATION

support him would not dare to refuse their adhesion. "I have only to speak the word and they will all be swept away," he added. "But though I have no fears for myself, I fear everything for France. If we squabble amongst ourselves instead of being united we shall meet the fate of the Byzantine Empire." He continued for a long time in the same strain—too long; for the interminable palaver led to no decision, and, by a strange turn of the wheel, while the Emperor was talking it was the Chamber that now took action.

While the day was still young the deputies had rushed to the Palais-Bourbon, the lobbies of which, according to one eyewitness, looked like "a hive in a state of anarchy."

### **The Deputies Meet.**

It was the prelude to one of those hectic parliamentary "days" which fill the frequently mediocre actors in them with a kind of puerile pride. But it was fear that was mainly responsible for their excitement and was spurring them on to take extreme measures. La Fayette was sent for and at last arrived. He could rely on the support of Lanjuinais, the President, who was even more of an ideologist than himself, and the man who, a week later, when Paris was being besieged by the Allies, exclaimed, "The safety of the country lies in the immediate completion of the Constitution!" A superb parliamentarian, in short!

At half-past twelve, the ground having been duly prepared in the lobbies, the President opened the session in a hall buzzing

### **La Fayette's Speech.**

with excitement. But when La Fayette mounted the rostrum there was a sudden profound hush. He opened in his usual formal manner. "When for the first time for many a long year a voice is raised which the old friends of Liberty will still recognise, I feel called upon to speak to you of our country's danger which you alone now have the power to avert!" After referring to "certain sinister rumours everywhere current," he called upon the Chamber to "proclaim its permanence"; it ought to declare that "any attempt to dissolve it would amount to high treason" and that whosoever was guilty of such an attempt would be "a traitor to his country and treated as such." The Minister of War, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Police should be immediately summoned to appear before the Assembly. He

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

further suggested that the Chamber should be placed under the protection of the National Guard. La Fayette never forgot the National Guard! Seeing that the Additional Act had given the Emperor the right of dissolution, there could be no doubt in the minds of those present that La Fayette's motion was unconstitutional, and there was some hesitation. The motion was eventually passed, however, and it was decided to have it communicated "to the two branches of the representative authority"—which, in the jargon of the day, meant the Chamber of Peers and the Government.

The news fell like a bomb on the Élysée, where the Council's deliberations were still being prolonged. Napoleon, apparently more irritated than disconcerted, declared that he would send a few companies of Guards against the rebels; but the courage of those about him including Davout himself, was already ebbing. "The time for action has passed!" snapped Davout, adding that in the circumstances it was no good flattering themselves they could conjure up another 18th of Brumaire. "For my part," he exclaimed, "I refuse to have anything to do with it." This declaration from the lips of such a man deeply perturbed the Emperor. "I see that Regnaud did not deceive me," he observed after a moment's silence. "I will abdicate if necessary." True, he added that, still offended by the Chamber's impertinent vote, he would abdicate only when it suited him.

Feeling suffocated in the Council chamber, he went out on to the terrace overlooking the Avenue Marigny and began to pace up and down with Lucien. The crowd which had collected round the Palace gave him a vociferous welcome. Lucien seized the opportunity to urge his brother to respond. At a sign from him the mob would rush to the Palais-Bourbon. But this was precisely what the Emperor did not wish. At a pinch he would have sent his Grenadiers there; but to hurl the populace against it would, he assured Lucien, have meant starting the Revolution all over again.

Meanwhile the Chamber had not adjourned but was awaiting the Ministers. Regnaud was the only one to put in an appearance, and so fast were their thoughts racing ahead, that the deputies

## THE SECOND ABDICATION

immediately jumped to the conclusion that he was the bearer of the abdication. They were doomed to disappointment, though his supplicatory attitude encouraged the wildest hopes. And indeed, he confined himself to asking them to give the Emperor time to take the desired step at his leisure and in a manner befitting his dignity. His request was grudgingly conceded; but the presence of the other Ministers was insisted upon.

**Regnaud in  
the Chamber.**

On his return to the Élysée, Regnaud obtained the Emperor's consent, also grudgingly given, for those summoned by the Chamber to attend. But in order to make it perfectly clear that this did not imply obedience to the summons sent by the Palais-Bourbon,

**Lucien and  
Carnot Sent  
to the  
Chambers.**

they were merely to accompany Prince Lucien, who was entrusted with an official communication, in which, moreover, the Emperor made no reference to abdication but, on the contrary, declared his intention of saving the situation in agreement with the Chambers. Carnot was entrusted with the task of conveying a similar communication to the peers in the Luxembourg.

The peers, by the very nature of their creation, should have been Napoleon's staunchest supporters; but I have already described their attitude and the strange sentiments which urged these "creatures" of the Emperor to proclaim their independence. On being informed of the motion passed by the deputies they accepted it enthusiastically. Pontécoulant emphasised its unconstitutional and therefore aggressive character, but only to declare that this made him all the more determined to vote for it, thus deliberately adding insult to injury. "I denounce in advance," he exclaimed, "any Minister who supports a decree for dissolution!" The peers signified their agreement. The session was then adjourned pending events in the Palais-Bourbon.

\* \* \* \* \*

At six o'clock in the evening Lucien had met with an icy reception there. He read his communication amid glacial silence. The Ministers present were then asked to express their opinion. Davout, Carnot and Caulaincourt having made a display of some-



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

what vague optimism which appeared rather forced, Fouché maintained silence. But one of his minions, a man named Jay, who had once been his secretary, mounted the rostrum and demanded point-blank of the Chamber whether the presence of Napoleon did not constitute an obstacle to peace. The question should have raised a violent protest, at least from the Ministers; but while they were casting enquiring glances at each other, Fouché rose to his feet and contemptuously announced that the Ministers had nothing to add to their statements. This deliberately evasive reply gave Jay his opportunity and he immediately turned to Lucien and called upon him to go and persuade his brother to abdicate and thus "save France, who had made such

**Lucien's  
Speech.**

heavy and distressing sacrifices for his sake." Lucien protested; he was extremely eloquent but allowed an unfortunate expression to escape his lips. "If

France," he said, "abandons her Emperor, she will lay herself open to severe censure for inconstancy and frivolity." There

**La Fayette's  
Retort.**

were violent cries of protest and La Fayette suddenly sprang to his feet. "That is a calumnious statement!" he exclaimed. "How can anyone dare

to accuse the country of frivolity and lack of perseverance in connection with Napoleon? She followed him through the sands of Egypt and the deserts of Russia, and it is because she followed him that she has to mourn the blood of three million Frenchmen!"

This cruel assertion could have been amply refuted by referring to the benefits conferred by the reign—the ridiculous figures quoted being, in any case, mere oratorical display—or even by a reminder of the glory that had been won. But as applause broke

**Fouché's  
Minions in  
the Chamber.**

out from nearly all the benches, Lucien himself was dumfounded and left the rostrum. All Fouché's minions immediately scrambled up one after the other, Manuel following Jay, and Lacoste

Manuel, all eager to make the most of the excitement. The Duke of Otranto's men were obviously playing into each other's hands. Since the Emperor was not abdicating and they did not as yet dare to vote "the fall," there was only one course open to them—to regard him as non-existent, which they virtually did by voting for the appointment of a Commission, consisting of five deputies and five peers, to share the deliberations of the Ministers. The

## THE SECOND ABDICATION

Chamber nominated all the members of its own Commission, which, with the exception of General Grenier, was unanimously hostile to Napoleon, and sent to urge the peers to appoint theirs. The latter complied, and the **A Commission Appointed.** Commission—which was also unconstitutional—met about midnight in the Tuileries, thus assuming the guise of an executive Council.

It was supposed to deal only with measures of defence; but as La Fayette opened the proceedings by declaring that as long as Napoleon remained at the head of the country all hope of peace was out of the question, the main problem was again raised. Thibaudeau, one of the peers on the Commission, pointed out that Fouché, who was seated next to him, was no longer attempting to hide his approval of La Fayette's assertion. Since Cambacérès, who was presiding, refused to have any motion aimed against the Emperor discussed, it was merely decided to appoint plenipotentiaries to conduct peace negotiations with the Allied Sovereigns, which practically amounted to setting Napoleon aside. At dawn the session was adjourned. "It must all be settled to-day," observed Fouché to his neighbour.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the morning of the 22nd a huge crowd was besieging the Élysée, shouting, "*Vive l'Empereur!*" Never before had a Parisian mob surged round a palace for the purpose, not of expelling a Sovereign, but of retaining him. It frightened the deputies. They, too, were of opinion that "it should all be settled." The Emperor himself was in a most terrible position. He still cherished a vague hope that the Chambers would come round and reach an agreement. From Laon he was receiving more reassuring news about the army which Soult was reorganising and which Grouchy had joined with his fresh troops, and Davout was sent to the Palais-Bourbon to convey the glad tidings to the Chamber. But the latter, which had again met, showed complete indifference, being entirely pre-occupied with securing the abdication. In the lobbies La Fayette ran across Lucien. "Make your brother send in his abdication,"

**Better News of the Army.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

he exclaimed brutally; "otherwise we shall tell him he has been deposed." The Prince was furious. "And I will send you La Bédoyère with a battalion of the Guard!" he retorted. Feeling was running high. Fouché had circulated a rumour in the Palais-Bourbon that the Emperor was awaiting troops from Laon in order to close the Chamber; he would have to be forestalled. And

### **Immediate Abdication Demanded.**

motions for his deposition were immediately presented. Regnaud, on reaching the Chamber, was sent back to the Élysée officially charged with the task of informing the Emperor that he was given one hour in which to abdicate.

At first Napoleon appeared outraged by such insolence. "As they are trying to force my hand," he declared, "I shall not abdicate!" Regnaud, however, obsessed by the illusion so unscrupulously instilled in his mind by Fouché, insisted. By abdicating, he solemnly assured the Emperor, he would save his son and his dynasty. "My son!" exclaimed Napoleon. "My son! What a delusion! It is not in favour of my son, but in favour of the Bourbons, that I am abdicating." Meanwhile the Ministers had arrived and fresh discussions were opened. Lucien again advised a *coup d'état*; but he had never enjoyed the confidence of the Emperor, who felt he suffered from a lack of judgment, and the violence of his language seemed to provoke a reaction. "Write and tell those good folk not to worry, Monsieur le Duc d'Otrante," he observed bitterly, turning to Fouché. "They will get what they want." Whereupon he dictated the act of abdication to

### **The Act of Abdication.**

Lucien himself, who was completely overwhelmed. "My political life is ended and I proclaim my son, under the title of Napoleon II, Emperor of the French. My interest in my son prompts me to invite the Chambers to lose no time in passing a law to organise the Regency." And he entrusted Carnot with the task of presenting himself at the Luxembourg, and with a sort of ironic magnanimity chose Fouché himself to go to the Palais-Bourbon to inform the Chambers of the abdication they had wrested from him.

At one o'clock the Duke of Otranto made a dramatic entry into the Palais-Bourbon. He read the act of abdication, spoke a few words of feigned regret, and proposed that the Chambers should appoint plenipotentiaries to enter into negotiations with

## THE SECOND ABDICATION

the Allied Sovereigns. But of Napoleon II he made no mention. Convinced that the return of the Bourbons was now inevitable, he was determined to preside over the restoration and be invited to lead a provisional Government. A motion for the appointment of such a Government was immediately proposed. Regnaud protested that, since Napoleon II was now Emperor, there was no need to organise a provisional Government. What was required

**A "Government  
Commission"  
Appointed.**

was a Regency Council. He could not, however, prevent the Chamber from proceeding, and it decided that a "Government Commission" of five members should be elected, three to be chosen by the deputies and two by the peers. It was the Duke of Otranto who, through his minions, led the dance. La Fayette naturally expected to be appointed; but Carnot having been elected by 324 votes and Fouché by 293, the poor fellow suffered the untold mortification of receiving only 142 votes, while General Grenier, of whom nobody had ever heard, was second on the list by a large majority. La Fayette was dumfounded. "The old fool!" exclaimed Fouché. The time had come for him to be rid of "the idiot" and he made arrangements to have him sent to the Allied Sovereigns, which would keep him out of Paris for a while. "You will agree," he observed to Pasquier that evening, "that we have not done badly in forty-eight hours."

The peers, on taking their seats, had been duly informed of the abdication and later on of the resolution passed by the Chamber, to which they gave their immediate assent. La Bédoyère made an attempt to have Napoleon II formally proclaimed, but Boissy d'Anglas declared that the proposal was "untimely"; and it was decided merely to send a deputation to Napoleon to thank him for the sacrifice he had made for the country. The Chamber of Deputies had already determined on a similar course.

The Emperor received both delegations. He reminded the deputies that he had abdicated only in favour of his son.

**Napoleon  
Receives the  
Delegations.**

Lanjuinais replied coldly that he would communicate "the wish" of the ex-Emperor to the Chamber. With the peers, nearly all of whom were old servants of the régime, Napoleon was more emphatic. "I have abdicated only in favour of my son," he declared. "Unless the Chambers proclaim him my abdication is void. To judge by

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

the way things are going it looks as though the Bourbons are to be brought back. You will soon be shedding tears of blood!"

It was already perfectly clear to him that a plot was afoot to get rid of the son as well as of the father and that, as the Emperor had been forced to abdicate, the Empire was indeed at an end.

For SOURCES and BIBLIOGRAPHY, see the end of Chapter LX.

## CHAPTER LX

### NAPOLEON II AND THE FALL OF THE EMPIRE

The proclamation of Napoleon II by the Chambers regarded as likely. Lucien's efforts in the Luxembourg; La Bédoyère's violent outburst. The peers confine themselves to appointing two of their number to the Government Commission. Debate in the Palais-Bourbon. Efforts made by the friends of the Empire to proclaim Napoleon II. Manuel, at the instigation of Fouché, succeeds in preventing this. Fouché seizes the Government; he aims at restoring the Bourbons and being rewarded with a portfolio. Napoleon at the Elysée; popular demonstrations. Davout, on being sent to the Emperor, requests him to leave. The latter retires to Malmaison. Davout demands the recall of Louis XVIII on certain conditions; his suggestion refused. The Allies march on Paris. Wellington escorts the King back to Cambrai and urges him to accept everything. Blücher exposed; but Davout does not seize the opportunity. Napoleon offers his sword to crush Blücher. It is refused. He leaves for Rochefort. The second capitulation of Paris. The Convention of July the 3rd, 1815. Fouché's intrigues to foist himself on Louis XVIII. He succeeds in being appointed Minister to the King. The Government Commission dissolved. The last session of the Chamber. Manuel evokes the memory of Mirabeau; "at the point of the bayonet." Lanjuinais closes the session. The end of the Empire.

**I**T seemed unlikely that the proclamation of Napoleon II would encounter opposition, either in the Chamber of Peers, which consisted almost entirely of friends of the imperial régime, or in the Chamber of Deputies, where a huge majority were opposed to a Bourbon restoration. But at eight o'clock on the evening of the 22nd of July, when the peers took their seats, it was obvious that intrigue had already been at work paralysing the supporters of the Empire. Lucien was determined to discover how matters stood, but, unfortunately, he was just as much *persona ingratis* in the Luxembourg as he was in the Palais-Bourbon. "In conformity with the Charter of the Constitution," he declared, "I call upon the Chamber of Peers to proclaim before the French people and the rest of the world that it recognises Napoleon II as Emperor of the French. I myself will be the first to set the example and swear fealty to him." The icy

**Probable  
Proclamation of  
Napoleon II.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

reception his speech was accorded infuriated him; he could not bring himself to believe that even if "traitors" and "sedition-mongers" existed elsewhere they were to be found in the Chamber of Peers. "If my ears have not deceived me," retorted Pontécoulant in withering tones, "an attempt is being made to force a motion on us without debate. I hereby declare that I will never recognise a child as King, or as my Sovereign anyone who does not reside in France. Are we sedition-mongers, we who desire peace?" Boissy d'Anglas came to his support; the proclamation of Napoleon II, he declared, would place fresh obstacles in the way of peace.

The Assembly remained plunged in gloom; there were vague murmurs, but nobody spoke. Suddenly a man sprang to his feet, his face flushed with indignation. It was young General La Bédoyère, the hero of Grenoble. He was literally beside himself. Knowing that the recall of the Bourbons meant his own ruin, he was also revolted by the cowardice prompting such treachery. Were they going to countenance the fall of the son as well as of the father? He spoke with savage fury without beating about the bush. "Who is opposing this resolution?" he demanded. "Certain individuals who, ever ready to bend the knee to power, show as much skill in deserting a monarch as in covering him with flattery. I have seen them round the throne, at the feet of the Sovereign in his glory. But as soon as misfortune overtakes him they run away. They are also repudiating Napoleon II, because they are eager to have the law laid down to them by strangers whom they are already calling allies and even friends." The Assembly was immediately in an uproar. "Young man," observed Masséna sternly, "young man, you are forgetting yourself." But La Bédoyère insisted on proceeding; he wished to have done with shilly-shally and to tear the masks from the faces of his opponents. The Chamber was terrified by the "madman"; there were loud cries of "Shame!" and he was howled down and dragged from the rostrum. "So only base voices may be heard within these walls!" he exclaimed. But, unfortunately, calmer counsels presently prevailed; Maret, Ségur, Roederer, and Flahaut, on the score of equity, demanded the proclamation of the little Emperor. That Pontécoulant, a Royalist at heart, should have opposed it is

## NAPOLEON II

comprehensible enough; but that ex-conventional regicides, like Quinette and Thibaudeau, who had everything to lose by a Bourbon restoration, should have supported this counter-revolutionary and repudiated Napoleon II, the only possible refuge of the old revolutionaries, is more difficult to understand. Doubtless Fouché had led them to hope for the accession of the Duc d'Orléans, the son of the "Red Prince." In the end they evaded

making the proclamation, but adhering to the idea of an executive commission, apparently accepted an interregnum. The peers chose Caulaincourt and Quinette by 42 and 48 votes respectively; Lucien—and this was typical—received only 18.

One last effort was made by the supporters of the régime in the Palais-Bourbon. The Chamber met on the morning of the 23rd,

**Debate on the Oath.** and proceeded to debate the subject of the oath to be sworn by the "Government Commission."

To whom was it to be sworn? To Napoleon II, declared the "Bonapartists." To the Nation, suggested Dupin. The Ministers of State, who had come to the Palais-Bourbon, protested against this formula. "Have we, or have we not, an Emperor of the French?" Defermon, one of their number, demanded, and courageously driving home the blow, added, "Napoleon II is our Sovereign. When we are seen to pronounce in favour of the ruler designated by our constitutions, nobody will be able to accuse us of awaiting Louis XVIII." It was a happy inspiration in that Assembly, which, though incoherent, was almost to a man hostile to the Bourbons of the elder branch. And there were fairly enthusiastic cries of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" Whereupon Boulay de la Meurthe and Regnaud, in their turn, demanded the formal proclamation of the little Emperor. But

**Manuel's Intervention.** Manuel, Fouché's minion, a parliamentarian with a genius for finding insidious formulæ, interposed just as it was on the point of being made, and stopped it by putting the following extremely equivocal order of the day to the vote: "The Chamber passes to the order of the day arising out of Napoleon II having become Emperor of the French by virtue of the abdication of Napoleon I and the constitutions of the Empire."

\* \* \* \* \*



## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

It was Fouché who had hustled Manuel on to the rostrum. He was anxious for the Government Commission to have a free hand and had every hope of converting it into an executive Government. Meanwhile, by means of unscrupulous wire-pulling, he had succeeded in ousting Carnot from the presidency and having the office conferred upon himself, and had forthwith forced his colleagues to usurp government authority by nominating Ministers and settling the appointments for the High Command in the Army. Not

**Fouché  
Seizes the  
Government.**

a single one of these decisions was made in the name of Napoleon II; Fouché audaciously seized the reins of power which he and his friends regarded as having been allowed to fall.

But the Government Commission was merely a spring-board. He had now made up his mind to lead France back to Louis XVIII, to whom, however, he would hand over the Government only on condition that he himself remained in it as Minister to His Most Christian Majesty. He had already discussed the matter with Vitrolles. The Comte d'Artois' friend was still incarcerated in Vincennes, but Fouché had him set free and immediately summoned him to his presence. He was to go to the King and inform him that there was a movement in his favour. "Even if we don't make directly for him," added the Duke of Otranto,

**Intrigue to  
Restore  
Louis XVIII.**

"we shall reach him in the end. But first we must get past Napoleon II and probably, after him, the Duc d'Orléans. But eventually we shall reach him." Vitrolles preferred to remain in Paris in order to organise the Royalist agents there; Fouché consented on condition that he kept in constant touch with him.

The Duke of Otranto had, as we know, got rid of La Fayette as early as the 23rd, by making the Chamber enrol him among the plenipotentiaries sent to the Allied Sovereigns to stop their advance—a mission which he regarded as foredoomed to the most complete failure. But there was one man who still gave him cause for anxiety, and that was Napoleon. Shut up in the Élysée,

**Napoleon at  
the Élysée.**

the ex-Emperor was the object of ever more vociferous demonstrations on the part of a mob whose numbers swelled from day to day. Moreover, the Army, which had been reorganised at Laon, had given vent to such furious indignation on hearing of the abdication that

## N A P O L E O N I I

Soult was extremely perturbed. There could be no doubt that if these troops were to march on Paris to set their idol on the throne again they would be met with open arms by the suburban Federations who were swarming round the Élysée. Who could tell what might happen then! What would all the webs spun by the Duke of Otranto avail against the popular movement? From hour to hour throughout the 23rd and 24th the acclamations round the Palace, where the Emperor still remained immured, grew louder and louder.

As a matter of fact, the latter had no intention of using the populace. But the Great Man was still a source of embarrassment, not to say fear. And, strange to say, it was Davout who accepted from Fouché the ungrateful mission of persuading the Emperor to leave Paris. Napoleon received the Marshal extremely coldly and dismissed him even more frigidly; but, still determined not to let loose any movement that might lead to civil war, he arranged to take his departure. On the 25th he reached Malmaison, where, in order to make doubly sure of him, the Government Commission appointed General Becker to act as his superintendent.

**Davout  
Requests  
Napoleon to  
Leave.**

Now that the Great Man was at last out of the way, Fouché felt confident of gaining his ends without anything happening to upset his plans. From that moment matters moved quickly; in fact, they seemed to be moving too quickly for the Duke of Otranto. On the 26th Davout, whom Oudinot, who had become a zealous Royalist, had urged to hasten the restoration of the Bourbons, which he regarded as inevitable and desirable, presented himself before the Commission; with the frank outspokenness of the soldier, he requested it, point-blank, to recall the King, who, he assured it, was willing to accept the tricolour and forgive and forget everything that had been done since the 20th of March. If this were done, the Marshal declared, the advance of the foreign armies on Paris might perhaps be checked.

**Davout  
Demands the  
King's Recall.**

He was indeed innocent and simple-minded! But Fouché, taken aback, showed little inclination to consider so swift a solution which would make his help far less valuable and upset his plans. The problem was solved for him by a despatch

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

from the plenipotentiaries entrusted with the negotiations. They declared, as a matter of fact on somewhat slender evidence, that they had reason to believe the Allies would not make the restoration of the Bourbons a *sine qua non* of peace. Fouché, on the other hand, feeling fairly certain that they would demand the surrender of Napoleon, was blackguardly enough to allow for this odious possibility and warned the captains of the vessels destined to convey the ex-Emperor to America, not to undertake the task before securing a safe-conduct from the Allied Sovereigns.

Meanwhile the Allies were marching on Paris, Blücher fretting and fuming to set everything on fire, Wellington, on the contrary, intent only on having the gates opened by means of a friendly settlement. In order to facilitate this he had summoned Louis XVIII to Cambrai and begged the King to issue a proclamation to reassure everybody who had played a part in the crisis of the 20th of March.

### **The Allies March on Paris.**

But a whole party was agitating round Louis for the immediate infliction of exemplary punishments. And it was this same party which, with a strange disregard of logic, was eagerly urging the King to come to an agreement with Fouché, the only Frenchman, they declared, who had the power to secure his safe return to Paris. This meant that a Ney would be executed while a Fouché was given a portfolio. Wellington, on the other hand, advised every possible concession demanded by the situation, and pardons all round; but he discovered, to his intense surprise, that while the adoption of the tri-coloured cockade was indignantly repudiated, the appointment as Minister of a man who had voted for the death of Louis XVI was faced with equanimity. Meanwhile Blücher, despising all this political wire-pulling, was rushing on Paris; driving the French Army, now under Grouchy instead of Soult, before him, he hoped to bring it to bay in the city. As Napoleon had gone, no serious resistance seemed possible. Even Davout, brave soldier and intrepid general though he was, despaired of it. As a matter of fact, he was over-pessimistic; he might at least have crushed Blücher, who, in his haste, having rashly cut himself off from Wellington, was courting disaster. But while Davout was hesitating and procrastinating, Fouché had sent

### **Blücher Exposed.**

## NAPOLÉON II

an emissary to Wellington to prevail upon this "enemy" to persuade the King that it was high time to throw his scruples to the winds and boldly make up his mind to employ a regicide—a hateful individual, no doubt, but for the time being extremely useful!

Napoleon, meanwhile, was still weighing matters. His presence at Malmaison continued to be a menace and he was being edged towards Rochefort, although he was given no guarantee of being allowed to embark in safety there. On the 28th, when the sound of the bombardment at Chatou, which the Prussians had just occupied, reached his ears, the Emperor seemed to wake up from

### **Napoleon Offers His Sword.**

the meditation in which he had apparently been wrapped for the last five days. He guessed that the Prussians were running great risks. Why were they not being crushed? On the 29th he offered to place himself once more at the head of the troops—as General Bonaparte—and give old Blücher a severe lesson; after which, he added, he would go away. Fouché was furious, and answered by a formal order for his departure; and that same evening the Emperor set out for Rochefort. Already the *Bellerophon* was

### **Napoleon on the *Bellerophon*.**

cruising along the coast; it was the "asylum" in which, conquered by life, he was to seek refuge; before long it was to be the ante-chamber of that prison where he was to end his days and into which we cannot now follow him.

Meanwhile negotiations were being conducted. At Cambrai the King signed a declaration granting an amnesty to all, except those of whom he felt an example should be made—a reservation which left the door open to all manner of reprisals. Thus to have betrayed Louis XVIII was made a greater crime than to have handed over Louis XVI to Sanson; for, at the same time, Louis at last faced the acceptance of Fouché as Minister, and, in return, that arch-villain, feeling reassured, hastened the denouement. As soon as Wellington had joined Blücher outside Paris, the President of the Government Commission manœuvred in such a

### **The Conven- tion of July 4th.**

way that Davout himself advised capitulation. In order not to offend sensitive ears, the capitulation, which was signed on the 4th of July, 1815, was called a convention. By it the defenders of Paris

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

were sent back to the Loire, whither, gnashing their teeth with rage, the veterans were led by Davout himself, conquered at last after countless victories, and, as reward for the glory they had won, treated as pariahs. Before a week had passed they were everywhere referred to as "the brigands of the Loire."

The Duke of Otranto, who now had a free hand, immediately set to work. The Chamber, which at one moment seemed to be rebelling against his policy, had calmed down. Composed of people whose interests, not to mention their principles, should have made them rise up against the restoration, the Assembly allowed him to have his way; the cowardice of their hearts darkened their vision. An occasional cry of "*Vive Napoléon III!*" was heard, but to such depths of lassitude had they sunk that they preferred to let themselves be deceived. And Fouché deceived them, though he also deceived the Royalists. At Arnouville, where the King had arrived, the Duke of Otranto let it be known that the Government Commission, the Chambers, the National Guard, and the suburban Federations were opposed to all idea of a restoration, and that if he entered Paris without due precaution, His Most Christian Majesty would lay himself open to outrages possibly of the worst description. The most necessary "precaution" was that Fouché should forthwith be officially placed at the head of the Ministry. It was a matter of give and take. But Louis still hesitated. Wellington, who had received a visit from Fouché

**Fouché and  
Talleyrand,**

on the 5th of July, instructed him to confer with Talleyrand, who had come to Arnouville to sound him. The Duke of Otranto had hoped the coveted

portfolio would be offered to him then. It had not been offered, and adopting a frigid attitude, he returned to Paris and allowed the National Guard and the Chamber to indulge in demonstrations definitely hostile to the Bourbons. Would that do the trick? He was soon to know, for on returning to Neuilly on the 6th he learnt from Talleyrand that Louis XVIII was awaiting him at

**Fouché made  
Minister.**

Arnouville to receive his oath as Minister. Fouché's oath! He went—and came back Minister to Louis XVI's brother! He immediately returned to Paris

and convoked the Government Commission to obtain from it the declaration of its own dissolution. Carnot, suspecting treachery,

## NAPOLÉON II

forced him to take off his mask and extracted from him a confession of the unprecedented recantation of which he had been guilty. The erstwhile member of the Committee of Public Safety gave vent to his indignation, but the three other members of the Commission—Caulaincourt, Quinette and Grenier—seemed resigned. They were tired; a whole world was abdicating after Napoleon.

On the 7th of July the Commission, in a letter written by their President, sent in its resignation to the Chamber.

**Resignation of the Commission.** The excuse given was that, by virtue of the Convention of the 4th, the Prussian troops had entered Paris and were invading the Tuileries, with the result that "their deliberations had ceased to be free."

On the other side of the river the deputies were still in session. In this Chamber, composed of so many old revolutionaries, not a single voice was raised in condemnation of Fouché's treachery. The order of the day was demanded and unanimously voted. Manuel mounted the rostrum and declared that they had all foreseen what had happened. He had certainly foreseen it! Indeed, as Fouché's minion, he had deliberately willed it when he artfully prevented the Chamber from proclaiming Napoleon II.

**Last Session of the Chamber.** But, being in the Palais-Bourbon, it was imperative to end up with fine phrases. "As for us," he exclaimed, "we must account to our beloved country for every moment of our time and, if need be, for the last drop of our blood. Let us, therefore, say with the famous orator whose words rang through Europe, 'We are here by the will of the people; we shall leave only at the point of the bayonet!'" His speech was cheered to the echo. As a crowning ignominy the wretched Assembly, whose sole achievement had been to paralyse and lay low the Emperor of the Revolution, ended its existence with this parody of Mirabeau's fine challenge. And bayonets—Prussian bayonets—having made their appearance at the end of the Pont de la Concorde, Lanjuinais hastily closed the session—the last session!

With this Chamber which, though elected by the country to collaborate loyally and cordially with the Emperor, had merely brought about the overthrow of Napoleon I, and, despite its principles,

**The End of the Empire.**

## CONSULATE AND THE EMPIRE

had not dared to proclaim Napoleon II, the great and glorious history of the Empire was brought to a lamentable close.

SOURCES (of Chapters LIX and LX). *Correspondance de Napoléon* (XXVIII). Lecestre, *Lettres inédites*. Moniteur, *Séances des Chambres du 20 juin au 7 juillet*. Wellington, *Despatches* (XII). Von Colomb, *Blücher in Briefen*. Memoirs and Reminiscences by Villemain, Thibaudeau, Molé, Queen Hortense (IV), Pasquier (III), Caulaincourt, Carnot, Vitrolles (III). Thiébault (V), Macdonald, Fleury de Chaboulon, Barère, Barante, Macirone, Beugnot, Chateaubriand (*Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*), Berlier, *Précis de ma vie*. Planat de La Faye, *Correspondance*.

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